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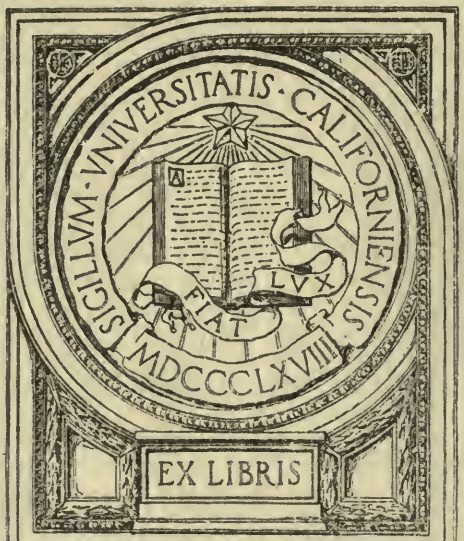

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WRATH OF ACHILLEUS

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Homerus

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

THE

WRATH OF ACHILLEUS

TRANSLATED FROM

THE ILIAD

INTO QUANTITATIVE HEXAMETERS

By GEORGE ERNLE

LONDON: HUMPHREY MILFORD
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Greek Sathen

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PREFACE

THE following translation of passages from the *Iliad* is written in the metre of the original poem, that is to say, in quantitative hexameters. There have been many attempts to write English verse in quantity but none to my knowledge has achieved popular success or diminished the prejudice which is naturally felt against any tampering with the established metrical system. Such attempts seem to imply disparagement of a prosody [illegible] poets of the past. I therefore feel it due both [illegible]ion in this [illegible] method by

ERRATA

p. 39, lines 355 and 361 into *should be* unto
p. 45, line 474 amongst Danaans *should be* against Danaans
p. 99, line 254 *insert* it *after* carried
p. 110, line 152 twins *should be* twin

Wrath of Achilleus

[illegible]ance to the [illegible]f our great [illegible] profess my Longfellow, its classical [illegible]lation to the [illegible]schylus and [illegible]ivals that of [illegible]rse of Homer is the iambic [illegible] Greek and [illegible]rpose, as my in the *Persae*

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PREFACE

THE following translation of passages from the *Iliad* is written in the metre of the original poem, that is to say, in quantitative hexameters. There have been many attempts to write English verse in quantity but none to my knowledge has achieved popular success or diminished the prejudice which is naturally felt against any tampering with the established metrical system. Such attempts seem to imply disparagement of a prosody which contented the great poets of the past. I therefore feel it due both to my reader and to myself that I should define my own position in this matter, point out the exact object at which I aim and explain the method by which I endeavour to reach it.

In the first place I desire to express my whole-hearted allegiance to the English iambic, whether rhymed or blank, in which the bulk of our great poetry has been written. The only form of metre with which I profess my discontent is the accentual hexameter of Kingsley, Clough, and Longfellow, which appears to me clumsy, monotonous, and unworthy of its classical prototype. Even its admirers will not claim that it stands in relation to the latter as the verse of Shakespeare and Milton to that of Aeschylus and Sophocles. The English iambic in beauty and effectiveness rivals that of the Greeks; the English hexameter is inferior not only to the verse of Homer but to our own blank verse. What is the reason of this? Why is the iambic the only effective vehicle for English narrative poetry? In Greek and Latin the hexameter is a far superior instrument for this purpose, as my reader will agree if he compares the account of the sea fight in the *Persae*

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of Aeschylus with any of the great battle-pieces in the *Iliad*. He will concede that the attempt to naturalize so glorious a metre is a worthy one, however desperate; that the hexameter is the only metre in which one may hope to give any adequate rendering of the swift, rolling, and magnificent music of Homer. The difference in form between hexameter and iambic is a difference in spirit; and I cannot think that blank verse, couplets, or stanzas, however beautiful, will ever be found satisfactorily to reproduce the spirit of the original. It is for this reason that I have adopted the hexameter as my instrument; and being dissatisfied with the purely accentual form of it, have endeavoured to correct its failings. It appears to me that the superiority of the English iambic is due to a difference in the *manner* of its construction and my design is therefore to apply to the hexameter the principle which gives beauty and suppleness to the iambic. The adoption of quantity as a metrical basis is a secondary consideration, a step which is forced upon me—paradoxical as this may seem—in the endeavour to follow the principles of our own blank verse. My hexameter is no longer accentual in the sense that *Evangeline* is accentual; but though its metrical basis is quantitative, the place given to accent or stress is the place which it occupies in the English iambic. In order to explain my meaning let me have recourse to examples.

I take the following passage from *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, separate the component feet and mark the primary stresses with a circumflex,

Ôr, if|there wêre|a sým|pathy|in chôice,
Wâr, dêath|or sîck|ness did|lay siêge|to it,
Mâking|it mô|mentar|y as|a sôund,
Swîft as|a shâ|dow, shôrt|as â|ny drêam—

In these lines the strong stresses do not fall regularly upon the second syllable of each foot as one might expect in accentual iambic verse; they fall sometimes on the first, sometimes on both, sometimes upon neither. These stresses denote the natural manner in which we should read the lines or what I shall hereafter call the 'natural rhythm'. Were the lines challenged, however, we should assure ourselves of their correctness by

reading them in a forced and unnatural manner with a stress laid upon every second syllable. This is called 'scanning'; and the resultant rhythm I therefore call the 'scansion rhythm'. It is clear that in English iambic verse the lines do not read as they scan, or in other words the natural rhythm does not regularly conform to the scansion rhythm. The difference between the two rhythms gives beauty and variety to the metre. If they coincided regularly, if every line read exactly as it scanned, the result would be wearisome, stiff, and monotonous, and the peculiar beauty of the metre would vanish. Early specimens of blank verse furnish examples of this defect. In good iambic verse, whether rhymed or blank, the natural rhythm plays in and out of the scansion rhythm as the living vine plays about the geometrical pattern of a trellis by which it is supported, now following and emphasizing the lines, now crossing and obscuring them. This contrast between the fixed and flowing is not confined to the internal construction of the line but extends to the line itself and even to the couplet. The closes of lines and couplets must not be too regularly emphasized by stops or pauses in the sense; the ear must be relieved by what is called 'overflow', or the effect becomes unpleasantly monotonous, as in our earliest blank verse or the heroic couplets of the eighteenth century. For the present, however, I am only concerned with the internal construction of the line, and, with regard to that, need labour the point no further. It is sufficiently obvious that the peculiar effect of the English iambic is due to the freedom of the natural rhythm to differ from the scansion.

Our non-iambic metres are differently constructed in that they read exactly and invariably as they scan. Take the following lines from Clough:

Spirits with | spirits com|mingle and | separate | lightly as | winds do,
Spice-laden | South with the | Ocean-born | Zephyr! they | mingle and | sunder;
No sad re|morse for | them, no | visions of | horror and | vileness,
Would I were | dead, I keep | saying, that | so I could | go and up|hold her.

Here the stresses fall regularly upon the first syllables of the dactyls and spondees and the natural and scansion rhythms are identical. The same arrangement may be observed in the many beautiful metres, dactylic and

anapaestic, which are found in our lyric poetry from Shakespere's 'Come away,|come away,|Death' down to the choruses of Swinburne. In lyrical poetry the effect is sufficiently pleasing, mainly, I think because we conceive of the verse as sung and so conforming to the regular beat of some unheard melody. Take for instance Shelley's lines,

I arise|from dreams|of thee
In the first|sweet sleep|of night,
When the winds|are breath|ing low
And the stars|are shin|ing bright.

We seem almost to hear the guitar accompaniment of these beautiful lines and the recurrence of a single rhythm is therefore natural and satisfying to the ear. Moreover a lyric deals with a single emotion or incident and is commonly short, so that we have not time to weary of the rhythm. In long lyrical ballads constructed on this pattern the effect of monotony becomes unpleasant, I think. The reader may judge of this by comparing Tennyson's *Voyage of Maeldune* which is anapaestic with any old ballad such as *Thomas the Rhymer*. Apart from lyrical poetry, this form of metre is seldom used in English except in the accentual hexameter. All our great narrative poetry is written in iambics and for an excellent reason. A story full of changes of incident and emotion demands a supple instrument. When we listen to a song it is natural that the beat of the music should be regular: when we listen to a tale, the ear resents monotony. I venture to lay down the following axiom for narrative verse. *The English ear demands that the natural rhythm should be free to differ from the scansion rhythm.* It must of course differ within certain limits: if it exceeds those limits, all sense of metre is lost as in Doctor Johnson's mock-line of blank verse, 'Lay your knife and your fork across your plate'. The difference must be sufficient to avoid monotony without falling into formlessness.

The accentual hexameter does not conform to this axiom, as we have seen, and it is for this reason, I maintain, that it fails as an instrument for narrative poetry. An adapted form of it succeeds in the lyric. Browning's *Abt Vogler* is a thinly disguised form of rhymed elegiacs.

Would that the | structure | brave, the | manifold | music I | build,
Bidding my | organ o|bey ; | calling its | keys to their | work,
Claiming each | slave of the | sound, at a | touch, as when | Solomon | will'd
Armies of | angels that | soar, | legions of | demons that | lurk—

As a lyrical form this is excellent; but a story told in such a metre would offend the ear as the metre of *Evangeline* offends it. The problem therefore is to make the English hexameter conform to the axiom which I have laid down, to free the natural rhythm from the scansion rhythm and enable it to effect what it effects in the English iambic. We should not tolerate blank verse which read exactly and invariably as it scanned; there is no reason for astonishment that hexameters so constructed are unpleasantly monotonous to an ear of any fineness. Let us therefore examine our specimen of blank verse once more and mark the various ways in which its peculiar effect is produced. The first, the most violent and the most obvious, is the substitution of another foot for the iambus, or let us say more simply the stressing of the wrong syllable in a foot. Thus in the line

Making | it mo|mentar|y as | a sound

the first foot is stressed upon the first syllable instead of the second; a trochee is substituted for an iambus. Another way in which the scansion rhythm may be muffled or disguised is by the use of secondary instead of primary stresses. There is a tendency in English to lay a slight stress upon every other syllable of a word, so that in a word of many syllables there are several of these secondary stresses; as for instance 'indefensibility', 'meditativeness' 'incomprehensible'. This tendency fits the structure of the iambic admirably. In the line

Or if | there were | a sym | pathy | in choice

we may class the second syllable of the fourth foot as bearing a secondary stress, not only as occurring in the line but in ordinary parlance. There is

a more complete kind of 'muffling' than the use of secondary stresses for primary; it is the use of unstressed for stressed syllables. Thus in the line

To sett|le the|succ|ion of |the State

the second and fourth feet have no stress whatever. It is impossible to lay any emphasis upon the proclitic 'the' without doing violence to the sentence. 'The' and 'of' in this line have the value of stressed syllables by virtue of their position alone; in uttering the line we are conscious that the stress should fall upon them because the scansion rhythm is running in our heads like a sort of ghostly melody which underlies the actual rhythm, even when it is not sounding to the ear. We are helped out by the fact that both 'the' and 'of' are separated by one syllable from the preceding and following stresses and would therefore bear a secondary stress were they not proclitic. Thus we have three ways in which the natural rhythm may obscure the scansion rhythm; firstly by directly opposing it; secondly by muffling the stress; thirdly by omitting it.

Now we cannot apply these methods to any form of metre except the iambic without disintegrating its structure, because there is no other metre into which the English language naturally falls. Our tendency is to lay a stress upon every second syllable, or in other words, towards accentual iambics; this tendency is wholly inimical to the dactyl and the anapaest, which are feet of three syllables. It is worth while noting that the iambic tendency of which I speak is only just sufficient to provide a framework even for iambic verse, and that blank verse suffers some inconvenience from its closeness to prose. Of all English metres it is the easiest to write in, the hardest to write well in; and most of our poets have felt safer in their flight when their wings were tipped with rhyme. There are passages in Shakespeare which would not be recognized as verse if they were written as prose: there are others, if I may dare to say so, where the desire to avoid prosiness has driven him into bombast. Milton, a surer artist, avoids either extreme; yet even Milton appears to me simpler and more direct in his rhyme than in his blank verse. Extreme simplicity of metrical form is not wholly an advantage; where the subject does not uplift the verse there is a tendency to keep clear of prose by means of unusual diction. This however is by the way. My point is that in dactylic

and anapaestic metres it is impossible to misplace, muffle, or omit the stresses without ruining the structure of the verse. At least I do not know of any instance in which this has been done. In Shakespeare's lines

Not a flow'r, | not a flow'r | sweet,
On my black | coffin let | there be strown;

it is true that the stress would fall on 'coffin' rather than on 'black' were the lines written as prose. The juxtaposition of a strong stress to 'black' is the nearest approach to a muffled accent in non-iambic verse of which I am aware and has a delightful effect. Yet we emphasize 'black' in reading the line; we do not muffle the stress. How are we to free the natural rhythm from the scansion rhythm in dactylic verse after the pattern of the English iambic? My answer is that quantity alone can enable us to do so.

There are those who deny the existence of quantity in English. With them however I feel it useless to argue. The commoner and more reasonable attitude is to maintain that our language is so strongly stressed and so carelessly pronounced that mere quantity affects the ear too slightly to form the basis of any metrical system. Some poets have affected quantity without basing metre upon it; and it will be conceded that its use gives a peculiar effect which is readily recognizable by an English ear. Consider such lines as the following from Meredith's *Love in the Valley*,

Under | yonder | beech tree | single | on the | greensward

or

Lovely | are the | curves of | the white | owl sweep|ing
Wavy | in the | dusk, lit | by one | large star.

The use of quantity here is undoubted and the effect of its use is very peculiar and unmistakable. I am convinced that within certain limits there is greater scope for the employment of quantity in English poetry. The use to which I have put it in the hexameter is to strengthen the scansion rhythm in order

to free the stress-rhythm. The latter is altogether too strong and insistent to be employed mechanically in supporting the metrical structure. We have seen that in blank verse the scansion rhythm has a somewhat shadowy existence; that it is sometimes in violent opposition to the actual rhythm, sometimes muffled, sometimes simply unmarked. I propose to set the hexameter upon a quantitative basis. The stress-rhythm will still remain strong, insistent and of primary importance, as it must always be while English retains its present qualities; but it will acquire a new liberty, the liberty which it already enjoys in the English iambic. As in the latter, stresses will no longer be bound to fall upon particular feet; if the effect requires it they may fall elsewhere, may be muffled, may be omitted altogether. On the other hand the stress-rhythm must not lose touch with the quantitative rhythm to an extent which throws too great a strain upon the latter. I recognize that the latter is weak in comparison. My hexameters are therefore in a sense accentual as well as quantitative; but they are accentual, not as *Evangeline* is accentual, but as blank verse is accentual and precisely to the same extent. The place which I allot to quantity in my hexameter is that of the scansion-rhythm in ordinary blank verse; and to those who maintain that quantity is too slight a basis upon which to found a metre I may fairly retort that it is at least more solid than the scansion-rhythm upon which our greatest verse is founded. Those who stubbornly deny the existence of quantity may maintain that the foundations of my hexameter are imaginary. Yet the verse will still retain as effective a support from the stress-rhythm as our English iambic, and I trust that it will be as clearly distinguishable from prose. If I am so fortunate as to please the reader with my rhythm, he should bear with the methods which have enabled me to produce it, even though he disagrees with me in theory. And if that effect cannot be shown capable of reproduction by any other method, I may fairly claim to have justified my own. For in poetry the means are justified by the end and by that alone.

Quite apart from the arguments which I have put forward, a certain regard for quantity is indispensable in the hexameter even when it is purely accentual. The two main faults of this metre as we find it in Clough and Longfellow are monotony and clumsiness. The former is ineradicable so long as it remains rigidly accentual. But even in that case I can see no justification for such dactyls as 'Ocean-born' and 'would I were' which are highly offensive to the

ear. Apart from all question of the metrical basis, euphony demands that the dactyl should not be clogged with consonants, and the only cure for this defect is the observance of quantity, however partial. Complete observance of quantity can, I maintain, cure both.

I will now briefly explain the system of quantity which I have adopted and followed. On points of detail I do not expect to carry all my readers with me, for the subject is highly controversial. But on the main questions there is little room for disagreement and the main rules can be laid down without difficulty. To begin with, quantity is clearly dependent upon pronunciation irrespective of spelling, which in English is apt to be misleading. As in the Classical languages I divide all syllables into two classes, long and short. Long syllables are those with a long vowel-sound; or with a short vowel-sound followed by more than one consonant. Short syllables have a short vowel sound followed by a single consonant. Thus, 'stăr', 'bēat', 'ōat' are long because they have a long vowel-sound, and 'hăst', 'bĕst', 'fĭst' because they end in two consonants. Similarly 'hăt', 'hŭt', 'bĕt', 'fĭt' are short. There are, however, many exceptions to the rule that a combination of consonants lengthen the preceding vowel. In the first place the reader must guard against being misled by the spelling: many consonants are written but not pronounced and are therefore to be ignored for the purpose of quantity; as in 'would' 'should' which are short syllables and pronounced 'wŭd' 'shŭd'. Secondly, the doubling of a letter in English does not ordinarily mean that it is to be pronounced twice as in Italian. Only in the rare cases where it is pronounced in the Italian manner (e.g. 'thĭnness') does it lengthen a short preceding syllable. On the other hand many consonantal sounds are omitted in spelling but must be reckoned with, as the *w* and *y* sounds in 'liquid' and 'value' (lík-wid, vál-yu). Thirdly, the combinations of *l*, *r*, *w*, and *y* with other consonants are frequently treated as a single letter and in such cases do not lengthen the preceding vowel; thus 'ŭpplý', 'ăccrúe', 'ăssuáge', 'rĕfúse' (a-plý, a-krú, a-swéj, re-fyúz). If the syllable is accented however, and there is a tendency to split up the combination, I generally treat the syllable as long. Thus, 'ā́pplicant', 'sā́crilege',

'opulent' (op-yulent) 'value' (val-yu). Perhaps one had better say, in accordance with the classical rule, that such syllables are all 'doubtful'.

The letter *h* is altogether ignored as a consonant whether it is in combination with another consonant or not. Perhaps some of my readers may differ from me on this point, considering that the hard *h* should be given full consonantal value. It is disregarded in classical languages, however, and of all English consonants is certainly the lightest; the misuse of it by the vulgar, due to the inability of the infant ear to distinguish the aspirate, is a proof of this. I see no reason therefore why the line between short and long should not be so drawn as to exclude this letter from the list of consonants after the example of Latin and Greek.

The letter *r* is disregarded when it neither is trilled nor modifies and lengthens the preceding vowel-sound (as in 'earth', 'preserve'). Thus, 'bitterness', 'governor', 'waters'. It has been suggested to me that this disregard of the final *r* is as bad as the so-called Cockney rhyme:

> Canst thou wish for lineage high*er*
> Than twin-sister to Thali*a*?

But the objection to the Cockney rhyme does not lie in the fact that there is mispronunciation, but in the linking together of two disparates, similar in sound alone. My sole test is pronunciation. Is the final *r* trilled in English, or is it not? I find that it is not trilled in English though it is in Scotch. I cannot therefore consider it as affecting the scansion.

The combination *-ng* is treated as a single consonant except where the *-g* is sounded hard. Thus 'singing', 'ringer', but 'finger', 'anger'.

The combinations *-tch* and *-dg* are treated as a single consonant when sounded as *-ch* and *g* or *j*. Thus, 'witchery' and 'judges'; but 'Whit-church', 'bed-jacket', where the *t* and *d* are independently sounded.

All syllables ending in a vowel are long when stressed; thus 'violet', 'Diomed'. When unstressed, such syllables may be short as in 'creation', 'Diomedes'. The

same rule applies to monosyllables like 'he', 'she', 'we', 'you', 'to', 'the' and 'a' which are short when proclitic or enclitic but long when they carry an accent or stress. Thus 'we want you', 'to cling to', 'he believes', 'she declares'; but 'we, for our part'; 'to and fro'; '*a* man not *the* man'.

Classical names often present considerable difficulty owing to the way in which they are pronounced by us. Where a long syllable is pronounced short in English owing to failure to give full value to a double letter, I retain the long quantity of the original and expect the reader to amend his pronunciation. Thus in 'Phoebos Apollon', the double *-l* must be pronounced as in 'smell-less' not as in 'hollow'. I admit that I am not quite consistent however and neglect this rule where the word has become a common English word such as 'Hellas', and 'Hellespont'. In words like 'Priamos' and 'Niobe' I alter the first syllable from short to long under the preceding rule, I despair of ever getting them otherwise pronounced in English.

The final *-y*, *-ies*, and *-er* of words like 'memory', 'enemies', and 'flatterer' are treated as long or short according to convenience. This if the critic insists is a licence; but it must be remembered that such syllables are lengthened already for the purpose of rhyme—e.g.

Primrose, first-born child of Ver,
Merry spring-time's harbinger,

and

On the bats' back do I fly
After Summer merrily.

Besides which such words almost always occur before the caesura or mid-line pause. Before the caesura or any pause in the sense I do not scruple to lengthen a short syllable. E.g. a line may begin 'Groaning aloud heavily' or even 'Those dwelling in the City', the last syllables of 'heavily' and 'city' being lengthened before the caesura.

I do not recognize elision in any form. Thus 'the Achaeans' not 'th' Achaeans; 'to affirm', never 't'affirm'.

Such are the main rules with regard to quantity which I have adopted and observed. I will now take a few lines of my own and mark the quantity and the stresses in order to enable the reader to observe the extent to which the stress and scansion rhythms differ from one another. The beginning of the first passage runs as follows:

Sing me that | Anger, God|dess, which | blinding | royal A|chilleus
Balefully|, brought suffer|ings un|told to the | army of | Argos,
Sent many | souls of | mighty A|chaeans | into the | darkness
And flung a|broad the bo|dies to the | wild dogs | and to the | vultures
And to the | fowls of Hea|ven, till | Zeus had | duly a|ccomplished
All he de|creed. Sing of | it from | where Aga|memnon A|trides
And the ga|llant Achi|leus first | fought and | parted a|sunder.

The stress-marks show the natural rhythm of the lines and the manner in which they are to be read. If any of my readers, having perhaps a different notion from mine of what the rhythm of a hexameter should be, attempts to force my lines into a different mould, he will do me wrong. The lines cannot be read as those of Longfellow or Clough and are not intended to be so read. It will be seen, however, that in most of the feet the stress falls upon the first syllable as in the accentual hexameter, particularly in the second half of the line. The difference between stress and scansion is almost confined to the first three feet, because I am anxious to make the rhythm strong and easy to follow, not to put any excessive strain upon the ear of my reader, to whom the metre must necessarily be unfamiliar to begin with. Looking therefore to the beginnings of the lines, the reader will see that the scansion-rhythm is partially disguised in a number of different ways, as in blank verse. If 'Goddess' were accented

on the second syllable instead of the first, the initial line would be purely accentual; and indeed can be read as accentual by a different division of the feet. This is an instance of 'misplacement', similar to that in the line already quoted

Mâking | it mô|mentar|y as | a sôund.

In the second line, the syllables 'brought' and '-ings' bear secondary accents, so that the scansion-rhythm is rather muffled than wholly contradicted by the stress-rhythm and the ear can easily follow it. So, too, in the third line the natural rhythm 'Sent mâny sôuls' is but a light muffling of the scansion-rhythm 'Sênt many sôuls'; and so forth. The principle is much the same as in blank verse itself, but the scansion-rhythm is fortified by the use of quantity which at the same time gives lightness to the dactyls and ease to the metre in general. But object and method have been abundantly explained and I will weary the reader no longer by expatiating upon them. It is by the effect produced that the methods must be judged, that my theories must stand or fall. It is no part of the poet's duty to explain his devices or of his readers' to listen to them: these matters belong to the workshop, and I have only dwelt upon them because the subject is controversial and they are certain to be examined and discussed. Enough has been said to explain my standpoint and I now leave my work to the judgement of the reader.

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THE

WRATH OF ACHILLEUS

I

SING me that Anger, Goddess, which blinding royal Achilleus
Balefully, brought sufferings untold to the army of Argos,
Sent many souls of mighty Achaeans into the darkness
And flung abroad the bodies to the wild dogs and to the vultures
And to the fowls of Heaven, till Zeus had duly accomplished
All he decreed. Sing of it from where Agamemnon Atrides
And the gallant Achileus first fought and parted asunder.
What God aroused contention amongst these so to divide them?

'Twas the son of Cronides and Leto. He in his anger
Sent Agamemnon's army a foul plague, and the Achaeans
Lay ever dying of it; for why, Agamemnon Atrides
Shamefully used Chryses, God's priest, when bearing enormous
Wealth to redeem his daughter, he ventured unto the swift ships,
And carrying the fillets of a priest of Phoebos Apollon,
Bound on a golden sceptre, besought the Achaean Assembly,
Turning him especially to the two Kings, children of Atreus.

'Ye Sovereigns and people of Argos, may the eternal
God, dwelling in the Heavens, vouchsafe your army to conquer
Priamos and carry home your spoil to the country you came from:
Only allow my daughter to go free, taking an ample
Price for her, and reverence God's son, far-darting Apollon.'

With one accord the remaining Achaeans bade Agamemnon
Show the prophet reverence and take so noble a ransom,
Howso this pleased not their lord Agamemnon Atrides,
And he reviled and drove him away and rudely denied him.

'Quit my sight, greybeard, and do not let me behold you

Loitering or coming here henceforward unto the warships,
Lest chaplets and sceptre avail no longer to save you.
I'll never free your daughter. The years shall find her in Argos,
Find her a slave dwelling in my halls far over the water,
Pacing at her loom there and sleeping nightly beside me,
So disappear, and quickly, before I do you a mischief.'

Such was Atrides' answer. The old man trembling obey'd him,
Pass'd from him in silence by plunging thunderous Ocean,
And when alone, uplifted his old voice, crying in anguish
On the son of bright-hair'd Leto, King Phoebos Apollon.

'Lord o' the Bow of Silver, who art as a tower to Chryse,
Guarding us, and rulest Tenedos with mighty dominion,
Smintheus, hear and help me! If I have builded a gracious
Temple,—if I offer up fat goats and slaughter the choicest
Bulls in it, oh suffer this my boon to be duly accomplish'd;
Smite the Achaean people,—avenge my weeping upon them.'

So he besought. His prayer was heard by Phoebos Apollon,
And he descended lofty Olympus, flaming in anger,

His quiver fill'd with arrows, his bow on shoulder behind him:
And the arrows rang again for his heart's wrath, rattling at every
Stride of him. Invisibly, as night falls, so he descended,
And sat apart, looking over the warships of the Achaeans,
Whence as he loosed the arrow, his bow clang'd, evilly sounding.
First Phoebos smote only the mules and sharp-eyed watchdogs,
But very soon turn'd unto the men's selves, loosing his awful
Archery; and bodies of dead men burn'd numberless alway.

Nine days did the arrows of God destroy the Achaeans;
And on a tenth Achileus convened the Achaean Assembly.
This was a thought sent into his heart by ivory-shoulder'd
Hera, who loved Danaans and grieved to behold them afflicted.
When the Achaean people had all been duly assembled
And sat around, the son of Peleus uprose to address them.

'I am afraid our army, Atrides, will be returning
Speedily, if one of us survives and reaches Achaia,—
What with a most bloody war and now plague raging amongst us!
Come therefore, seek after a wise priest or a diviner

Or for a dream-expounder,—(a dream proves often a warning
Sent from above)—to tell us what so enrages Apollon.
Ask if he has smitten us for a vow's sake or for a victim,
And if a burnt-offering of rams or slaughter of he-goats
May not appease his fury, avert plague from the Achaeans.'

When the son of Peleus sat down, up started amongst them
Calchas Thestorides, far wisest of the diviners,
Whose cunning eye saw into the past and into the future,
Even as his cunning art, inspired by Phoebos Apollon,
Led the assembled navy to Ilium out of Achaia.
Now he arose readily and cried out, saying in answer,

'If valiant and noble Achilleus wants me to tell you
Truthfully, what sin of ours enrages Phoebos Apollon,
I'm ready and will tell you. But e'er I answer the question,
Swear, Achileus, to defend me from insult and to protect me.
I am afraid of offending a lord here, who is a mighty
Ruler amongst Danaans and all our army obeys him:
And it is ill displeasing a King, when lowly as I am.

Though for a time a Monarch digests his deadly resentment,
Ne'ertheless it dies not from his heart, 'tis smouldering inly
Until occasion offers! Say therefore,—will you protect me?'
So the gallant Achileus uprose, thus saying in answer,
'Be not afraid. Speak boldly whate'er God bids you reveal us.
By the son of Cronides, that Deity, whom you appeal to,
Ere you reveal oracles of God to the army of Argos,
While Achileus is standing on earth and seeing about him,
Nobody at the galleys shall lay hand rudely upon you,
Were he the best Danaan that breathes,—not royal Atrides,
He that is our Sovereign and greatest of the Achaeans.'
Then Calchas the diviner replied thus, gaining assurance.
'Not for a mere hecatomb nor vow is Phoebos offended.
He doth avenge Chryses, his priest, whom Lord Agamemnon
Shamed when he sought his daughter, refusing rudely the ransom.
'Tis therefore that Phoebos afflicteth us, and shall afflict us
Further. He will never lift this sickness from the Achaeans,
Till we return his daughter to Chryses, not for a ransom,

Nor any price, but freely. Return her, sending a hundred
Beeves as a peace-offering: thus doing, ye shall appease him.'

When Calchas was seated again, up started amongst them
That valiant and haughty Monarch, Agamemnon Atrides,
Fill'd with a most bitter wrath—his broad breast heaving in anger,
His very eyes asparkle as if live fire was in them.
First he address'd Calchas with a look which boded him evil:

'Augur of ills! Never in your lifetime have you rejoiced me
By any word you utter'd. You delight in gloomy predictions,
Not to announce anything that's good nor see it accomplish'd!
Now you harangue my army, you set my people against me,
Forge oracles, and tell them Apollon smites the Achaeans
All because I chose not to return his daughter to Chryses,
Neither received her ransom of him! Why should we release her,
When we prefer having her for a bond-slave; when we prefer her
Greatly to Clytaemnestra, the Queen's self? She is of equal
Loveliness and not a whit less wise or highly accomplish'd.
Ne'ertheless, if need be, we agree to surrender the maiden,

Since we desire your safety, we would not see you afflicted.
Find me then instead of her some fresh prize, lest of Achaeans
I am alone left prizeless,—a thing not seemly to dream of.
My other prize is wrested away, I call you to witness.'

Then the gallant Achileus uprose and spake to Atrides:
'Be not so covetous, my lord Agamemnon Atrides.
How can a prize be given by proud-soul'd sons of Achaia,
Since a common treasury exists not whence to provide it?
After we sack the cities their spoils are duly divided,
And to demand back again men's shares will scantly beseem you.
Yield therefore this maiden. Obey God. Let the Achaeans
Pay you the price threefold or fourfold after the final
Victory when the treasures of Troy are parted amongst us.'

His Sovereign Agamemnon Atrides said to Achilleus:
'Think not thus to beguile me, for all your mighty achievements,
By trickery. I am not a fool to be easily cheated.
Sirs, Achileus fears losing his own prize, so he desires me
Tamely to give mine up: small wonder he bids me release her!

If the gallant Danaans find some fresh prize to present me,
Something of equal value, which I moreover approve of,
Good! But if I get not such a gift, I mean to procure it
Forcibly by carrying *your* prize off, or that of Ajax
Or Odyseus, how sorely soe'er I anger the owner.
Let that abide meanwhile: I will think further about it.
Fit me a swift galley out forthwith, run her into the water;
Get me a crew together; ship Phoebos quickly a hundred
Beeves as a peace offering; lead fair Chryseis aboard her;
And let a noble chieftain of high rank go to command her.
Either let Idomeneus, Odyseus, Telamonian Ajax,
Or yourself, Achileus, that think there 's nobody like you,
Journey with our hecatomb to appease far-darting Apollon.'

Now Achileus look'd darkly on him, thus saying in answer,
'Have you the face to utter such a threat, most grasping Atrides?
How shall a chief of Achaia rejoice hereafter to serve you,
Faring on expeditions or fighting bravely in action?
I left not my country to fight here over a private

Injury. *I* never had been wrong'd by people of Ilium.
They never drove *our* horses away nor spoil'd *us* of oxen,
Nor in a raid on Phthia, the deep-soiled breeder of heroes,
Harm'd any crop. Too mighty a distance keeps us asunder,
Mountains rise shadowy and wide seas thunder between us.
'Twas to oblige *you* only, to serve *you*, marvellous ingrate,
And Menelaos yonder,—to win *you* glory besieging
Ilium! And is it all despised and counted a trifle?
Now you propose ravishing my maiden wrongfully from me,
Won with a world of labour, a free gift of the Achaeans.
Mine is a far lesser prize than yours, sir, when the Achaeans
Plunder a rich stronghold they win from children of Ilium.
I have enough trouble on my hands—ye give me the lion's
Portion of every battle! When spoils are parted asunder,
Yours is a prize of value: but I go wearily limping
Home to the ships, cherishing my own, though only a mean one
I shall array the vessels and sail home unto the land of
Phthia! It is better so. I have no fancy to bide here

Heaping a King riches up when treated shamefully by him.'

His Sovereign Agamemnon Atrides spake thus in answer:

'Flee home, if you desire to. Remain no longer, we beg you,
Serving us unwilling and unwanted. Plenty remain here
Yet to uphold our glory,—the Lord God being amongst them.
I ever have least liked you of all chiefs of the Achaeans,
Since it is only quarrels and strife and slaughter delight you.
Strength is a gift given us by God,—cease boasting about it.
Flee to the land of Phthia with all your company—rule there
Over the Myrmidones, since I no longer require you,
Neither regard your fury! A word more, master Achilleus!
Since Phoebos constrains me to yield his daughter to Chryses,
Home in a swift ship of ours my folk shall speedily bear her:
I shall arise, and enter your own tent, forcing an entrance,
And carry your Briseis away thence, merely to teach you
I have a hand heavier than yours, and warn the remainder
Not to oppose their Ruler in open council as equals.'

Anguish assail'd Achileus at these words, so that his heart seem'd

Cloven in his shaggy breast, two halves diversely desiring,
One to pluck out the weapon, slung sharp and mighty beside him,
Sunder the King's followers with a bound and slaughter Atrides,
One to refrain his fury, to curb and bridle his anger.
While he remain'd still searching his heart and doubtfully minded,
Fingering his sword-hilt, down grey-eyed Maiden Athene
Came to him out of Heaven, dispatch'd by ivory-shoulder'd
Hera, who loved Achileus and likewise royal Atrides.
And the Goddess, gripping his gold hair, stood closely behind him,
Invisible to the people assembled, saving Achilleus.
Turning around in wonder he look'd on Maiden Athene,
Knowing her. And terribly those eyes flamed, as she beheld him!
So the son of Peleus spake wing'd words unto the Maiden:
'What brings thee, O Daughter of Aegis-wielder Cronion?
Is't to behold Agamemnon Atrides shamefully use me?
Hearken as I prophesy what thou shalt see me accomplish.
This bitter jest shall cost him his own life ere he believes it.'
Then she address'd Achileus and spake thus, saying in answer:

'I am arrived from Heaven to refrain your fury, Achilleus,
If you will only listen—sent down by ivory-shoulder'd
Hera, who loves Achileus and loves Agamemnon Atrides.
Nay, Achileus, leave fighting alone, and draw not against him!
Only give him bitter words—foretell the disaster approaching.
Hearken as I prophesy what time shall shortly accomplish.
Thrice what he seizes from you, the King shall speedily give you
For this offence he offers. Strike not therefore, but obey me.'

Thus she besought. The gallant Achileus spake saying in answer:
'I shall obey thy holy commandment, lady Athene,
Even in extremity of wrath. 'Tis seemly to do so.
Him that obeys their order, the Gods hear calling upon them.'

Smiting his hilt of silver with huge hand, noble Achilleus
Thrust the massive sword home and hearken'd unto Athene.
So she arose and, leaving Achilleus, flew to Olympos
Where the divine Cronides, her Sire, dwells with the Immortals.

But the son of Peleus turn'd once more unto Atrides,
Railing on him bitterly, nowise restraining his anger.

'You with a doe's spirit and dog's eyes! Wine-bloated Atrides!
That never have the courage to put arms on when the Achaeans
Are coming out to battle nor join in laying an ambush
Like other chiefs—'twould scare you to death straight, did you attempt it!
Truly it is better far to sit over the host of Achaia,
Taking away their prizes, who durst in Council oppose you.
Ours is an abject people who let so worthless a Ruler
Eat us up, or otherwise 'twere your last infamous action.
Now therefore I swear you an oath and call you to witness.
By this sapless sceptre,—as it no longer produces
Foliage or puts forth fresh twigs, since hewn from a parent
Trunk in a mountain hollow; or grows green after the axe-edge
Has cut away both bark and boughs and made it an emblem
For Danaans to carry, watching over the laws of Achaia
Under divine governance, ('tis a great oath, awful of import).
When the Achaean people on all sides yearn for Achilleus
Vainly—when all agonized, you strive and may not avail them—
When warriors are dying in heaps and merciless Hector

Slaughtering—oh, bitter be your thoughts then—rage to remember
How you regarded lightly the bravest of the Achaeans!'

Here the son of Peleus dash'd down that sceptre before him,
Plentifully studded o'er with gold, and seated him after.
Great was Atrides' fury! Then up rose Nestor amongst them,
Who was a wise Pylian, most smooth-tongued of the Achaeans.
Sweeter than oozing honey his words dropp'd while he address'd them.
Nestor in his lifetime had seen two whole generations
Growing up and flourishing for awhile and dying around him.
It was a third generation who fill'd his goodly dominions.
Now he arose eloquent and spake out, standing amongst them.

'Oh, what a black misfortune is overwhelming Achaia!
What merry news goes shortly to Priamos and to the sons of
Priamos! How citizens of Troy shall glory to hear it,
When the report shall reach them of how ye wrangle in idle
Anger, the best warriors and wisest of the Achaeans!
Sirs, listen, I implore you. You both are younger than I am.
Mightier and better men than you have formerly kept me

Company, yet never did my comrades lightly regard me.
They ever chose to follow my counsels and to be guided.
Ye likewise, I pray you, be guided. That shall avail you!
Do not abuse your greatness, Atrides. Seize not a maiden
Who was a prize given him, to begin with, by the Achaeans.
And Achileus, cease rousing a King's wrath, railing against him
Scornfully. It fits not your place, Sir. Are you of equal
Rank with a crown'd Sovereign? God sets him greatly above you!
You, we allow, are mighty—we own that a deity bore you.
Our Sovereign is greater, because more people obey him.
Come, pacify your fury, Atrides. Let me beseech you
Not to be wrath with noble Achilleus, who is a mighty
Champion in bloody fight and bulwark of the Achaeans.'

Thereupon his Sovereign Agamemnon spake thus in answer:
'That's very true. I say not a word, old Nestor, against it.
Only you see the fellow that sits there wants to be ruler
Over us all; he wishes to command all and to direct all
And give us all our orders. He is not surely to do so!

If the Immortals made him a good spear, yet the Immortals
Have given him no charter to load his Ruler with insults.'

Here the son of Peleus broke in, thus crying in answer:
'Nay then, if I never raised my voice but tamely agreed to
Each folly that you utter'd, men might well call me a coward!
Order about other folk henceforward, neither command me
Further, for I shall not for my part further obey you.
And have a care moreover, for here I warn you, Atrides,
Though you remove the woman by force I shall not oppose you.
Neither oppose any man. Ye take my maiden, who gave her.
But lay not one finger on aught save only the maiden
Lying at our warships, unless their owner allows you.
Make the attempt! Let yonder Achaeans see you attempt it.
My spear-head shall quickly be dyed red, weltering in you.'

Wrangling and threatening to the last, they parted asunder,
And the Achaean people arose and left the Assembly.
While Achileus, the son of Peleus, with knightly Patroclos
Went to his own warships and all his company likewise,

Lord Agamemnon launch'd him a swift galley, duly selected
Twenty of his mariners, bade them ship Phoebos a hundred
Beeves as a peace offering, led fair Chryseis aboard her,
And to command the vessel chose prudent-hearted Odysseus.

So Odyseus sail'd over the wet ways, while the Achaeans
Under Atrides' order began their purification,
And gathering together their filth, flung it into the waters.
And bringing out their bulls and goats they slew them in hundreds
On the barren seashore to appease far-darting Apollon.
Rolling up in smoke-wreaths to the Heav'ns their savour ascended.

Thus Danaans were toiling at home. But wily Odysseus
And the divine hecatomb came meanwhile safely to Chryse.
His galley there sail'd into the deep-bay'd sheltering haven:
Whereupon his mariners struck sail and stow'd it amidships,
Lower'd their mast down by forestays on to the mast-crutch
Easily, and running out their oars back'd water to beach her.
They cast their stones forth, they made both hawsers abaft her
Fast to the beach, sprang ashore themselves on watery shingles,

Hoisted ashore the cattle they brought for Phoebos Apollon,
And stepping off the galley Chryseis landed amongst them.
Then the man of stratagems, Odyseus, led her unto the altar
And thus address'd her father in whose embraces he laid her.

'Chryses, our Sovereign Agamemnon sends me to greet you
And to return your daughter. He likewise sends you a hundred
Oxen as our offering to appease your Master, Apollon,
Seeing he has smitten us with a great and grievous affliction.'

So Odyseus put her into his arms, and gladly the old man
Took back again his daughter. The rest came up to the altar
Driving along the cattle: they ranged their oxen around it.
After having washen hands they caught up barley in handfuls.
Then Chryses uplifted his arms and cried in a loud voice:

'Lord o' the Bow of Silver, who art as a tower to Chryse,
Guarding us, and rulest Tenedos with mighty dominion,
Ev'n as thou didst hear me aforetime calling upon thee
And honour me, and smite me the whole host of the Achaeans,
So suffer now my further desire to be swiftly accomplish'd.

Turn thine evil sickness away, Lord, from the Achaeans.'

So he besought. His prayer was heard by Phoebos Apollon.
After the pray'r was utter'd they cast their barley before them.
Drawing their heads back, they slew each victim in order,
Flaying him and cutting out his thighs. They wrapt fat around them,
Folded it over double, then laid raw slices upon them.
These Chryses burnt over a log-fire, quenching it after
With ruddy wine. The others with pitchforks gave him assistance.
After the burnt-offering of thighs and tasting of entrails,
Then cutting up the remainder the people placed it upon spits,
Roasting it all properly ere once more drawing it off them.
After the meat was roasted, a task they quickly accomplish'd,
All fell on it. None wanted a fair share—all had abundance.
Their appetite for meat and drink now being abated,
Youths, filling up the flagons with wine, pour'd into the wine-cups
Drops for a drink-offering, then charged their glasses in order.
They sang aloud thereafter, the young men, sons of Achaia;
Chanted a sweet solemn hymn till nightfall unto Apollon;

Praised the divine Far-darter. His heart loved dearly to hear them.

When the sun had set again and night was fallen upon them,
Lying around the galley, they slumber'd under the hawsers:
But setting out, soon after the red Dawn's fiery fingers
Parted a cloud, steer'd into the broad camp of the Achaeans,
Hauling up and spreading out their sail. For Phoebos Apollon
Help'd from afar and sent them a fresh wind blowing abaft them.
Mightily it bellied out their sail, and loudly the wave roar'd
Under her, as the galley's black bows crash'd into the blue seas.
Trampling along the billows, her course was quickly accomplish'd.
Her mariners, coming into the broad camp of the Achaeans,
Ran the hollow galley there on shore and hoisted her upwards
On to the dry sea-sand and laid long timbers in order
Under her, ere scattering themselves, each unto his own tent.

But the son of Peleus meanwhile, proud-hearted Achilleus,
Was sitting at the vessels and nursing deadly resentment.
And he repair'd no longer to win fame in the Assembly
Or honour in the mellay; he remain'd there eating his heart out

For the shock of battle and for surge and thunder of onset.

While Achileus sat amongst the vessels, Agamemnon Atrides
Held the threat in memory which he erst had spoken against him,
And summoning the heralds, that were his trusted attendants,
Eurybates and Talthybios, thus gave them his orders.
'Go to the Myrmidones' encampment. Enter Achilleus'
Tent there. Seize fair-cheeked Briseis. Bring me the maiden.
Say, if he will not let you, that I with an army behind me
Shall come apace and take her,—a way less likely to please him.'

So he address'd the heralds and laid stern order upon them;
And the men, unwilling as they were, went over the shingle
Unto the Myrmidones, to the ships and tents of Achilleus.
There the son of Peleus was seated, close to his own ship,
And when he saw the heralds was nowise greatly delighted.
Trembling in reverence and fear of royal Achilleus
They stood afar and did not accost him, neither approach him.
He, guessing at the errand they came on, gave them a greeting.

'Hail, reverend and holy heralds! I pray you approach me

Nearer. It is nowise your fault, your master Atrides
Sends you to take the woman Briseis wrongfully from me.
Come, bring her out, I pray you, Patroclos. Render the maiden
Up to the King's Summoners. Ye twain, bear witness against him
Truly before perishing mankind and blissful Immortals
And this accursed Ruler, if e'er hereafter Atrides
Comes to require Achileus to avert some deadly disaster
From the Achaean people! He now raves, wild as a madman,
And as a fool looks neither before him, neither behind him,
Reckless of imperilling both ships and people of Argos.'
So he declared. Patroclos obey'd his comrade Achilleus
And bringing out the woman Briseis gave her as order'd
Unto the two summoners. They fared home under the ships' sterns,
And sorrowing she follow'd. With a burst of weeping, Achilleus
Turn'd from his own comrades and went down close to the breakers
And sat upon the pebbles looking over the infinite Ocean.
There with his arms extended he cried to the lady who bore him:
'O mother, since you've born me to short life, born me to die soon,

Surely the dread Cronides, whose voice peals out of Olympos,
Owes me a life of honour. But he doth not pay me—he doth not!
My Sovereign, Agamemnon Atrides, puts me to open
Shame; for he has carried off my prize most shamefully from me.'

His mother heard him weeping, afar off under the waters,
Seated amongst the caverns with her aged father beside her,
And swimming up, stole over the grey sea, soft as a sea-mist.
And she approach'd Achileus and sat down softly before him,
And as he wept, stroked him with her hand and ask'd him a question.

'Child, what is all your weeping about? What makes you lament so?
Tell me the worst, I pray you, that I may weep for it also.'

Then with a most bitter groan Achileus spake saying in answer,
'Tell you? You know well enough yourself. Why make me repeat it?
Well, the King Eëtion ruled Thebe, and we attack'd it,
Wasted it and carried off its spoil to the camp of Achaeans.
After arriving safely, the gear was duly divided
And we assigned Chryseis, a fair maid, unto Atrides.
Then Chryses her father, the priest of Phoebos Apollon,

Came to the mail'd warriors and black ships of the Achaeans,
Fain to redeem his daughter. A noble ransom he brought them,
And carrying the fillets of a priest of Phoebos Apollon
Bound on a golden sceptre, besought the Achaean Assembly,
Turning him especially to the two Kings, children of Atreus.
With one accord the remainder of us bade lord Agamemnon
Show the prophet reverence and take so noble a ransom.
Howso that pleased not my lord Agamemnon Atrides,
And he reviled and drove him away and rudely denied him.
So Chryses went angry away; and Phoebos Apollon
Mightily loved Chryses and heard his prayer against us.
Thereupon he smote us with his archery, and the divine shafts
Flew very fast all over the broad camp of the Achaeans,
And one upon the other they died. Then a seer amongst us
Search'd the divine oracles and told our army the reason.
I therefore took upon me to talk of making atonement,
Whereat Atrides rising, as if some fury possess'd him,
Made me a most bitter oath which he now had newly accomplish'd.

Her the quick-eyed Danaans thrust straightway into a swift ship
And carried home the woman with a peace-offering for Apollon;
While the departing heralds have borne off under his orders
My bond-maid Briseis, a free gift of the Achaeans.
You, Mother, *you* must help me, your own child. Go to Olympos,
Kneel to the Lord. If ever yourself did father Cronion
By any word or action a good turn, make him assist me.
Have you not often told me at home and boasted about it,
How the King of Storm-clouds was once near deadly disaster
And none in all the Heavens, save you, would afford him assistance;
How other Gods, such as Hera, Poseidon, Maiden Athene,
Join'd in a conspiracy and bound their Ruler between them;
How you ascended Heaven yourself, Goddess, and you released him.
Calling up his many-arm'd, many-handed monster to help you
(Briareös they call him in Heav'n, Aegaeon amongst men),
Who has a might exceeding his own Sire's; how he ascended
Glorying and sate there in triumph next to Cronion,
And none of all the Blesséd dared speak of binding him after!

Mind him of it—cling about his knees—fall lowly before him.
Pray Cronides, as he loves you, to put strength into the Trojans.
Let Danaans, driven under the ships' sterns into the water,
There perish and be lesson'd how much their Ruler avails them;
Let this accursed Sovereign Agamemnon know him a blinded
Fool to regard so lightly the bravest of the Achaeans.'

His Mother lady Thetis fast wept, exclaiming an answer.
'Ah wretched I, that bare you to grief and rear'd you to anguish!
Would you abode happy at your ships, never knowing affliction
Nor any tears! You have only a short life—'tis not a long one.
Woe to the hour I bare you in our halls! For the Immortals
Gave you the unluckiest of lives and gave you the briefest.
I will arise and journey to mist-enfolded Olympos,
There to beseech Cronides for assistance, as you desire me.
But sit amongst the galleys yourself, child, nursing a righteous
Anger amongst Danaans, and do not join them in action.
Lo, Cronides last even, attended by the Immortals,
Went to the Sea's confines, to the virtuous Aethiopeians,

Where he remains revelling twelve days ere seeking Olympos.
I will ascend thereafter to God's halls, built of eternal
Bronze, to beseech your favour. The Lord will scarcely refuse me.'
Thus promising, the Goddess went home and left him alone there,
Eating his own heart out, in deep wrath over the maiden.
After the twelfth sunrise, the Immortals, as she predicted,
Came travelling to Olympos, a great host, under the guidance
Of Cronides. And Lady Thetis forgot not Achilleus'
Charge to her and swam aloft at dawn to the surface of Ocean,
Rose to the mighty Heavens and enter'd into Olympos.
Seated on its topmost pinnacle, looking over the thousand
Folds of it in solitude, she beheld Almighty Cronion.
Down she fell and clung about his knees and lifted a humble
Hand to him in suppliance and touch'd Almighty Cronion
Under the chin. There sat she before him, thus she address'd him.
'Father, if I ever did thee service among the Immortals
By any word or action aforetime, grant me assistance.
Raise Achileus to honour! Thou knowest, Father, he dieth

Early, before other folk: and now Agamemnon Atrides
Shameth him and robbeth him, despitefully seizing his handmaid.
Thou therefore exalt me Achilleus, Lord of Olympos!
Put strength into the army of Ilium, and the Achaeans
Shall be obliged to honour my child and make him atonement.'
Thus she besought. The Shepherd of Clouds was mightily silent
Nor for awhile made answer. She fasten'd unto the Lord's knees
Closelier and pressing him to reply yet further besought him.

'Either nod and promise it forthright or simply refuse me.
Why hesitate, why waver? Refuse, and give me assurance,
I am of all Goddesses despised most heartily by thee.'

Then very sorely troubled, Cronides spake saying in answer,
'Lady, this is sorry work. Thou wilt embroil me with Hera
Over it—her bitter words will stir me to anger against her.
Ev'n as it is, she attacks me at all times in the Assembly
Most bitterly, for granting assistance unto the Trojans.
Do not abide therefore but go hence ere she beholds thee,
And the request shall duly be granted when we devise us

Means for it. I bow thee my head for further assurance.
No other sign or token in all Heav'n surelier bindeth
Than the nod of Cronides. For an oath so taken is always
Sure to be kept—I may not evade such, neither revoke it.'

So the divine Sovereign bow'd his dark brows to the sea-nymph,
And from his head so kingly the dark locks streaming around him
Waved as he bow'd: and thunder resounded shaking Olympos.
After the close colloquy they rose and parted asunder.
She, springing out of Heaven, swoop'd downwards into the deep sea,
While Cronides went unto his own halls, where the immortal
Deities, all sitting on their thrones, uprose to receive him.

II

THE ARGUMENT

This passage opens after the defeat of the Achaeans, which has been brought about by Zeus in the fulfilment of his promise to Thetis. The Trojans, completely victorious, camp for the first time in the open plain in front of the Achaean camp.

II

THUS warriors of Troy kept watch: but those of Achaia
Lay given up to Panic, which dogs Fear like a retainer,
And agony, that searcher of hearts, came over the bravest.
As when a gale, springing up nor'westwards, rouses a teeming
Ocean, as it rushes out of Thrace, coming all in a moment,
Darkening all the billows; and lo, each monster arises
Helmeted and tosses out much seaweed over the beaches,
So terror heaved and lifted in each breast of the Achaeans.
Restless in his misery, their lord Agamemnon Atrides
Went bidding all the heralds go forth and call the Assembly,
Whispering each Danaan by name, not making an outcry.

And busily the Monarch himself too toil'd to collect them.
All downcast his people assembled: and Agamemnon
Rose to address them weeping. He wept tears fast as a fountain
Falls from a dark precipice, scattering like mist to the breezes.
Thus with a most bitter groan he address'd the Achaean Assembly:
'Ye who command our army, who rule this people of Argos,
I am afraid Cronides cast cruel blindness upon me
When long ago he promised and pledged our army to conquer
Ilium and carry home her spoils safe unto Achaia.
That was a false covenant, it appears now; since he desires us
After enormous slaughter to seek our country defeated.
So we believe Cronides ordains; and He is an awful
Deity, and many lands have bow'd head lowly before him
And many more shall bow them. He rules all—none can oppose him.
Come therefore, do quickly as I, your Ruler, command you.
Hasten upon shipboard and flee home over the waters
And tarry here no longer in hopes of capturing Ilium.'
After Atrides' order the folk were mightily silent

And bitter shame came over the whole host of the Achaeans.
Then Diomedes rose and rang forth, loud as a trumpet,
'I shall oppose your madness in open council, Atrides,
Where it is our privilege. Let not plain speaking offend you.
You, Sir, chose to rebuke me before our army, remember,
Taxed me as unwarlike and faint-soul'd. All the Achaeans,
Both warriors and elders alike, know how you address'd me.
Truly the gifts of Heaven were not bestow'd on Atrides
Equally; since Cronides exalted you to the sceptre,
Yet never gave you courage, which lends true value to greatness.
Do you believe, unworthy Atrides, that the Achaean
People is unwarlike and faint-soul'd as you declare us!
Sir, if your spirit is so bent upon hastening homewards,
Go, set about your journey. The way is yonder before you;
Your many ships which bore you to Troy lie close to the water.
But the remainder of us, we, unshorn sons of Achaia,
Shall carry on the battle till Troy falls. If the remainder
Will not, if all other men flee home in company with you,

Here I and Sthenelos shall fight and finally conquer
Ilium. Our coming here was God's work. God shall assist us.'
At Diomedes' answer a shout rose from the Assembly
And the Achaean people applauded loudly to hear him.
Rising amidst uproar and tumult Nestor address'd them:
'You, the son of Tydeus, are passing mighty in action
And cunningest in counsel of all our younger Achaeans.
Nobody will cavil at your speech or argue against it.
Yet to be frank, I tell you, the true conclusion evades you.
He is a bad citizen, bad friend, false unto his own hearth,
Who would arouse discord which freezes public achievement.
Come now, good Danaans—night calls us; we should obey her;
So let us all to supper. But first, I pray you, appoint us
Sentries, who shall watch around our trench-side under the ramparts.
See to the task, ye younger Achaeans! Then let Atrides
Act as a great Sovereign—invite his Council of Elders
Unto a feast. It fits you, it is your duty to do so.
You have abundant wine—for merchant-ships of Achaia

Daily arrive bringing it from Thrace just over the water.
Take, as a mighty Monarch, our entertaining upon you.
Where many meet together, choose him that gives you the wisest
Counsel. It has never been more needed by the Achaeans!
Our enemies camp under the rampart, close to the warships.
Yonder the plains glitter with their fires. Small joy to behold them!
This very night must either preserve or ruin us wholly.'

All the Achaean people approved this counsel he gave them.
So the watchers putting on their arms took station as outposts
Under seven warriors: first Nestor's son, Thrasymedes;
Next to him Ascalaphos with Ialmenos—offspring of Ares:
Meriones and Deipyros were next them in order;
Then the gallant Aphareus: then Creion's son Lykomedes.
These warriors watched over the whole camp. Each had a hundred
Mighty men and valiant, that bore spear, under his orders.
Midway 'twixt rampart and trench each company of them
Seated it and lit a fire and supp'd in a circle about it.

Their Sovereign, coming unto his own tent with the Achaean

Elders attending on him, there made them a savoury banquet.
Seeing it in readiness they turn'd to the plenty before them.
Their appetite for meat and drink now being abated,
Nestor arose foremost and spoke first, both as his oldest
Councillor and as having proved wisest in the Assembly.
So he began setting out his mind, advising Atrides.
'Most valiant and mighty Atrides, lord Agamemnon!
I begin and finish all with *you*. God made you the Ruler
Over a host so mighty—the Lord has lent you the sceptre
Both to judge all Danaans and take thought how to direct us,
You above all other folk must both speak carefully therefore,
And listen unto others and see wise counsel adopted.
No matter whom you follow, *you* are responsible only.
'Tis therefore my duty to give my truthful opinion.
Nobody will better it—for none sees clearer than I do
What we require. I hold it unalter'd since the commencement,
Aye, ever since, dread Ruler, you sent forth unto Achilleus
And carried off Briseis, a deed incensing Achilleus

And done against our counsel. Alas, I warn'd you against it,
Begg'd you to consider it. But you, too angry to hearken,
Did very foul dishonour to a champion, whom the immortal
Deities held in honour, by wrongfully seizing his handmaid.
Sir, if it is possible, let us ev'n now strive to appease him,
Sending a friendly message and peace-gifts unto Achilleus.'

His Sovereign Agamemnon Atrides spake thus in answer:
'Nestor, it is very true. You, sir, have rightly reproached me.
I was a fool, I own it—a blind fool! Even an army
Is nothing in the balance to a champion after the Lord's heart.
'Tis to avenge Achileus' disgrace, God smites the Achaeans.
Since therefore folly caused me to err when blinded of anger,
I will appease Achileus, offering great gifts of atonement.
Hearken as I reckon up their worth and number before you.
I offer twenty talents of gold—ten fiery cauldrons—
Seven very costly tripods—twelve horses, train'd to the race-course,
Which carry off great prizes at all games of the Achaeans.
Though he possess'd nothing else but that much, none would account him

Need-stricken or lacking in red gold, that boasted of owning
Such riches as the winnings of my twelve horses amount to.
I offer him moreover the sev'n choice Lesbian handmaids,
Craftswomen, excelling all their sex in beauty, selected
From the women prisoners, when Lesbos fell to Achilleus.
I offer him Briseis, his own maid, into the bargain.
He shall have her back again, and I will swear him a great oath
I never touch'd the woman myself, nor carnally knew her.
These many gifts are merely a foretaste. When the Achaeans
Plunder the town of Priam—if e'er God grant me to waste it—
Ere we divide any of the spoil, shall noble Achilleus
Enter in and carry off what gold and silver he pleases,
Even a whole shipload, and take which twenty he pleases
Of the women prisoners and fairest ladies of Ilium,
Queen Helena excepted alone, as being an Argive.
When we return thereafter to our rich kingdom of Argos,
We will account Achileus our son, no less than Orestes,
Our little heir, left safely at home and royally cared for.

Further, we have three daughters in our fair mansion at Argos,
Chrysothemis and Laodice and Iphianaxa:
And the son of Peleus shall wed which daughter he pleases
Freely, without bride-gifts: and I will grant her a greater
Dowry than e'er Sovereign has granted daughter before her.
Sev'n very wealthy cities shall be her portion, Achaeans.
Pherae; Kardamyle; green-swarded pastoral Hira;
Wide Enope—Antheia, the land of plenteous harvest,
Pedasos all set about with vines; Aipeia the beauteous.
All seven are in sandy Pylos, they border the blue sea.
Numberless are the cattle they own there, mighty the sheepfolds;
They shall adore and worship Achilleus, heaping enormous
Gifts on him, and reverence his laws and prosper beneath them.
Our promises shall duly be made good, so that his anger
Ceases. He ought to listen. Death alone is not to be soften'd
Nor pacified: men call him an evil deity therefore.
So let him acknowledge us for lord and loyally serve us
Both as a greater monarch and likewise greatly his elder.'

Then the Gerenian elder, the good knight Nestor address'd him:

'Most valiant and mighty Monarch, Agamemnon Atrides,
Nobody will cavil at such peace-gifts as you propose him.
Quick therefore—no further delay—choose suitable envoys.
They should approach Achileus this night, not losing an instant.
Let me select the fittest. They will not surely refuse me.
You, Phoenix,—I choose you the first and name you the leader:
Next I choose Ajax; and you next, noble Odysseus:
And Hodios the herald and Eurybates to attend you.
Come, bring a bowl of water; wash hands, all. Pray to Cronion
Mutely, with all reverence, to be merciful unto Achaia.'

This the Achaean princes approved, each holding his hands forth,
While the heralds coming in forthwith, pour'd water upon them:
And filling up the flagons with wine, their youthful attendants
Pour'd for a drink-offering, then charged their glasses in order.
After the wine was offer'd and each drank all he desired to,
They then arose and voided Atrides' royal apartments.
And the Gerenian elder, he gave charge unto the envoys

(Glancing at each, but chiefly Odysseus—while he address'd them)
How to approach the son of Peleus and how to beseech him.
So setting out, the couple walk'd by loud-thundering Ocean
And with a fervent prayer to Ocean's Ruler Poseidon
So to touch Aeacides that they might easily move him,
Came to the Myrmidones, to the ships and tents of Achilleus.
Now Achileus was seated at ease there, playing a clear harp,
Bridged with a bar of silver, adorn'd with beautiful inlay,
Taken at Eëtion's town Thebe, after he sack'd it.
Smiting his harp in rapture, he sang men's glorious exploits.
Mute on a bench opposite one comrade, namely Patroclos,
Waited on Aeacides till his heart should weary of harping.
All unawares their party approach'd, with noble Odysseus
Leading it, and stood there. Up straightway started Achilleus
And stood amazed, still grasping his harp; and master Patroclos
Started up as readily on seeing strangers approach them.
So Achileus spoke after a pause and gave them a greeting.
'Welcome, of all visitors! Once more, most heartily welcome,

Though the Achaeans vex me, of whom I hold you the dearest.'

Then the son of Peleus conducted them to a chamber
And covering the settles with rugs, bade either be seated.
Next he address'd Patroclos who drew near, waiting his orders.

'Go, bring a larger vessel, Patroclos—mingle a finer
Wine in it and spare not—set cups out quickly before us:
Since visitors so dearly beloved are seated in our hall.'

At the command Patroclos in all haste went to obey him.
And Achileus, first rolling a great block nearer the firelight,
Hoisted a large sheep's chine and fat goat's carcase athwart it
And an enormous swine, deep-sunk in savoury fatness.
Then while Automedon held fast each carcase, Achilleus
Jointed it, and cutting off choice pieces set them upon spits.
And fetching in fresh timber Patroclos made them a bright fire.
After the blaze utterly died down and smouldering embers
Only remain'd, Achileus laid his spits over the embers
Resting upon spit-racks. Each joint was carefully salted
And set upon the platters when roasted. Master Patroclos

Brake the bread and set it out in well-wrought osier baskets,
While Achileus look'd after the meat and saw it apportion'd.
Now Achileus, on taking a seat which fronted Odysseus
Under the wall opposite, bade his squire render the first fruits
Unto the Lord Almighty. He cast these into the embers.
Seeing it in readiness they turn'd to the plenty before them.
When the desire of food and drink was duly abated,
Ajax nudged Phoenix to begin. But noble Odysseus
Noted it, and filling high his cup drank unto Achilleus.

'Hail, Achileus, I pledge you. We lack not royal abundance
Either at our Sovereign's, my lord Agamemnon Atrides,
Or at Achilleus' table. At each board there is an equal
Plenty: but our appetites are turn'd from savoury viands,
For we behold destruction at hand, lord, and it affrights us.
Can we defend the vessels or no? That question, Achilleus,
Lies hanging in the balance, unless you speedily rouse you.
Sir, the allied Lycians and Trojans, fill'd with assurance,
Lie bivouack'd right under the rampart close to the warships.

Yonder the plains glitter with their fires. No doubt is amongst them
Of carrying the vessels in their next furious onslaught,
God flashes in the Heavens for a sign to the armies of Ilium
Ere the assault, and Hector, assured of victory, rages
Towering and maddening with pride. No power appals him,
Either divine or human. A mad strength makes him a giant.
He is awake out yonder, he prays bright Dawn to arise soon,
Vows to lop off figureheads and ensigns from the Achaean
Navy, to make the galleys one flame-whirl, hurl the defeated
Into it and smother us with smoke and shamefully slay us.
I have a deadly terror lest God lets Hector accomplish
These bitter threats—lest haply he means our army to die here
And never see the meadows where our steeds pasture in Argos.
Rise, Achileus,—God gives you a last chance. Stop the accurséd
Whooping of our enemies, our hearts are weary of hearing.
Will you repent to-morrow and weep when weeping is idle?
After a deed is done, there's no cure. Strive to prevent it
Quickly, before the blackest of days dawns on the Achaeans.

Sir, Peleus, your father, he laid these charges upon you,
That very day they sent you to serve here under Atrides.
'Child, Cronides may grant you a man's strength, Maiden Athene
Heighten it, if she wishes. But rein your fiery pride in
And moderate your temper. 'Tis always best to be gentle.
Strive to avoid quarrelling—shun foul strife; and the Achaeans,
Both warriors and elders alike, shall love you the dearer.'
Do you obey his counsel? Alas, no! Yet we beseech you
Late as it is, fling away ev'n now this poisonous anger,
And Agamemnon makes you immense gifts if you agree to.
Sir, listen, only listen, to the gifts Agamemnon Atrides
This very night has offer'd in his own tent. Let me repeat them.
Sev'n very costly tripods—ten burnished fiery cauldrons;
Twenty talents, Achileus, of gold; twelve beautiful horses,
Which carry off rich prizes at all sports of the Achaeans.
Though he possess'd nothing else but that much, none would account him
Need-stricken or lacking in fine gold, that boasted of owning
Such riches as the winnings of those twelve horses amount to.

And Agamemnon offers sev'n maidens, highly accomplish'd
Craftswomen, excelling all their sex in loveliness also.
After you captured Lesbos, Atrides chose them, Achilleus.
And he returns Briseis, he took despitefully from you.
You shall have her back again, and he will swear you a great oath,
Saying he has never shared her bed nor carnally known her.
These many gifts are merely a foretaste. When the Achaeans
Are given all the treasures of Priam by the Immortals,
Ere we divide any of that spoil, shall noble Achilleus
Enter in and carry off what gold and silver he pleases,
Even a whole shipload; and take which twenty he pleases
Of the women prisoners and fairest ladies of Ilium,
Queen Helena excepted alone, as being an Argive.
When we return hereafter to Argos, there shall Atrides
Treat you as his very son, no less than royal Orestes,
His little heir, left safely at home and royally cared for.
Further, he has three daughters in his great mansion at Argos,
Chrysothemis and Laodice and Iphianaxa.

If you desire to marry, lead home which daughter you like best
Freely, without bride gifts. Agamemnon grants her a fairer
Dowry than e'er Sovereign has granted a daughter before her.
Sev'n very wealthy cities shall be her portion, Achilleus,
Pherae; Kardamyle; green-swarded, pastoral Hira;
Wide Enope; Antheia, the land of plenteous harvest;
Pedasos all set about with vines; Aipeia the beauteous.
All seven are in sandy Pylos, they border the blue sea.
Numberless are the cattle they own there, mighty the sheepfolds; 290
They will adore and bless you, Achilleus, like an immortal
Deity and reverence your laws and prosper beneath them.
These promises shall duly be made good, so you assist us.
Even if hate forbids you to make peace with the Atrides
And you reject the presents, have mercy upon the Achaean
Army in its agony, and all shall simply adore you.
Since as it is, 'twere easy to win great worship amongst us.
Hector is at your mercy—the fool would venture against you,
Blind in his own arrogance! He believes him a mightier champion

Than the biggest Danaan that sail'd here out of Achaia.'

After he paused Achileus spake straightway, saying in answer:

'Most valiant and noble Odysseus, seeing Atrides
Sends you upon this errand, 'tis fairest plainly to tell you
My full opinion of it, my fixed intention about it,
Not to sit and listen here while you strive vainly to coax me.
Hateful as Hell's gateway is a man concealing his inward
Purposes and giving us smooth answers, noble Odysseus,
I therefore shall tell you the plain truth though it offend you.
Rest you assured that neither Atrides nor the Achaean
Army will e'er persuade me: for I am weary of always
Fighting a King's enemies—'tis far too thankless a business.
For we behold the laggard and foremost fighter rewarded
Equally, and valiant and base all treated as equals,
And death alike coming unto the toil-worn as to the idle.
It profited me nothing to be worn-out—weary of hardships,
Weary of imperilling my life in dangerous actions.
Just as a toilful bird, that bearing savoury morsels

Home to her own nestlings, herself goes hungry to feed them,
Often have I sat awake all night long, serving Atrides,
Fought for him in bloody fields from sunrise unto the sunset,
Only to win the women my foes died stoutly defending.
Twelve cities I have wasted across seas, sailing against them;
I have attack'd and taken elev'n towns under the walls of
Ilium. I carried off their spoils, I faithfully told them
Into the King's treasury, to the hands of royal Atrides,
That sitting at the vessels in comfort used to receive them
And give away a little to the chiefs and keep the remainder.
All other kings and princes who had such prizes assign'd them
Hold them on his sufferance. I only of all the Achaeans
Had to return the woman my heart loved. Let the Atrides
Lie with her—I care not! Danaans, why fight you the Trojans?
Why has Atrides brought you to die here, sons of Achaia?
Why, on account of Helen's bright hair! But do you believe them
Singular in cherishing their wives, these children of Atreus?
Nay, any man worth calling a man, not merely a rascal,

Clings to the wife he wedded. Though mine were only a captive,
None the less I loved her with a deep and tender affection.
After having carried off my prize, let not the deceiver
Tempt me again. I know him. He shall not make me believe him.
You, Odyseus, you princes of his, can counsel Atrides
How to protect the vessels from fierce flame, if you desire to.
Me he requires no longer—he does so bravely without me,
Building a high rampart, good Gods! and delving a deep moat
Under it and filling it with sharpen'd stakes to defend him!
And cannot all his efforts keep out victorious Hector?
There was a vast difference while I was fighting amongst you.
Hector array'd the battles in my time under the gates of
Ilium or sallied out at most to the neighbouring oak-tree.
I sprang alone upon him one day there and he abode me
And very nearly perish'd. But now my fighting is over,
I offer up to-morrow to the Lord and all the immortal
Deities and victual all my ships and launch them in Ocean.
Look forth, if you desire to, if it concerns you to see us.

Starting about sunrise my ships sail over the teeming
Water, the crews pulling at their oars and driving us homewards.
'Tis but a three days' journey, if Earth-enfolder Poseidon
Favour us, and Achileus shall come to the land of Phthia.
I've many great possessions I left in Phthia behind me
And carry home the treasures of gold, grey-glistering iron
And ruddy bronze and shapely women, my duly apportioned
Booty. But I carry not my prize home, since Agamemnon,
(Curses on his tyranny!) took back that maiden he gave me.
Go to him and tell him all I say—tell him in the Assembly—
Let the Achaeans hear you. Whet indignation against him
Over the next Danaan, that he thinks of cheating as I was
Cheated. He can never change his spots, can shameless Atrides,
Though, it appears, in public he dares not face me, the dastard.
Fight for him I never will, by God, nor counsel him either
After the tricks he's play'd me! He seeks now how to beguile me
By flatteries. But once is enough. We've parted asunder
Finally. I'm quit of him. God's wrath has made him a madman.

I spit upon the offers that he makes,—they move me to laughter.
Were he to give fivefold or tenfold all that he boasts of
Owning in his treasuries or dreams hereafter of owning;
Give me what Orchomenos contains, what children of Egypt
Garner up in Thebae, where huge hoards cumber the houses,—
Thebes of a hundred gates, where ten score fighters in armour
With chariots and horses abreast march out at a gateway;
Were he to lay me treasures like stars in number before me,
Numberless as sand-grains or dust, they should not appease me
Till the debt of bitter shame were paid back down to the last pang.
I never will wed daughter of his—tell that to Atrides.
Were she a maiden fairer than Ocean-born Aphrodite,
Mistress of as many arts as grey-eyed Maiden Athene,
Ne'ertheless I would not marry her. Let lord Agamemnon
Find her a mate elsewhere—I were too lowly a husband.
If we return home safely from Ilium, and the Immortals
Spare me, the king Peleus himself shall find me a maiden.
There 's many maids in Hellas, many maids in Phthia to choose from,

Ladies of high lineage whose sires ward wealthy dominions:
And Achileus shall find him a bride there, choosing amongst them.
My spirit has long moved me to sail home, look for a noble
Maiden, a fair helpmate, and dwell thereafter beside her
Peacefully on the riches my aged father bequeaths me.
Life is a far better thing than wealth is—life is a jewel
Of many times more value than all proud Ilium erewhile
Boasted of in peace time ere foes came out of Achaia,
And richer than the treasures which lie 'neath Phoebos Apollon's
Temple upon the rock of Pytho in chambers of hewn stone.
I can acquire cattle and fat sheep by seizing upon them
And money buys me tripods and bright-maned fiery horses,
But nothing e'er can capture a man's life, after he breathes it
Out of him, and nothing in God's world can purchase it either.
My mother lady Thetis, long since has plainly assured me
Two different fates bear me upon my journey to Death's Gate;
Told me, if I tarry here and fight, God gives me eternal
Glory, but I fling away my hopes of safely returning;

And if again I fight not, if I sail home to Achaia,
I fling away my glory to gain life—life for a longer
Period instead of it—death shall not speedily seize me.
You other folk were wiser to sail home even as I do
And tarry here no longer. The hope of capturing Ilium
Has manifestly vanish'd, since Zeus extendeth his awful
Hand, covering the city, and new hope nerves the defenders.
Go your ways therefore, bear my words unto the Council
Of the Achaean princes. It is your duty as elders.
Seek for a fresh stratagem, for a plan more likely to help you
And to preserve the vessels and whole host of the Achaeans
That dwell around the vessels. Your first has proven a failure
As reckoning completely without my deadly resentment.
You, Phoenix, I bid you remain and slumber beside me.
When we set out to-morrow at daybreak, you shall attend me
Home—that is, if you wish it. There 's no compulsion about it.'
Such was Achilleus' answer. The rest were mightily silent
After it; his passionate response completely abash'd them.

Long was it ere grey-hair'd Phoenix might answer Achilleus,
Weeping most bitterly—for he knew what danger the ships ran.
'If you resolve indeed to return home, noble Achilleus,
And you refuse utterly to prevent or hinder the burning
Of the Achaean navy, you feel such fury against them,
How then is it possible for me, dear child, to desert you
And to remain? Your father commanded me to attend you
When setting out from Phthia to serve here under Atrides.
You, Achileus, were only a child and needed a teacher
Ere you achieved eminence in warfare or the assembly;
Wherefore Peleus sent me to teach and train you in either,
Make you alike eloquent in speech and manly in action.
I would not forsake you, beloved child, neither remain here
When you depart to-morrow, though God should strip me of age's
Hoariness, and Cronides should once more make me a youngster,
Waving adieu in Hellas to the girls and journeying into
Phthia, to that mother of white flocks and plenteous harvests,
Where Peleus your father who ruled then kindly received me.

There as a man, possessing but one son, uses his infant
Heir to a great heritage, so used your father to treat me,
Raised me to mighty riches, bestow'd much power upon me,
Set me amongst Dolopes on Phthia's border, to rule there.
There likewise I rear'd you to greatness, noble Achilleus;
My very heart I gave you. 'Twas I that bore you to banquets;
Nobody might carry you to the banquet-chamber beside me.
I ever made you sit on my knee and carved you the morsels
Which you desired, and held you the wine-cup for you to drink from.
And you would oft sputter out your wine as a baby is apt to,
Poor innocent, and wet me upon my tunic, Achilleus.
I never grudged you trouble nor spared pains when you required them,
Thinking—as unhappily God did not bless me with issue—
I would adopt my master, adopt you, royal Achilleus,
And have a son to protect me when old age left me defenceless.
Conquer the proud spirit in your breast, child, seeing it is not
Good to be implacable. The immortal deities are not,
Who have a pow'r and glory beyond our mortal attainment.

For we behold how savour of incense, vows of amendment,
Burnt offering, libation appease Gods, if we will only
Pray to them, however great our guilt is when we offend them.
Pray'rs, Achileus, are daughters of high God. Could you behold them,
They would appear squint-eyed and lame and fearfully wrinkled.
They ever toil to follow where Sin may wander before them.
Sin 's very swift and mighty—she leaves them limping a long way
After her as she travels God's world and causes abundant
Mischief among men in it. But Pray'rs come later to heal it.
He who receives them kindly, who gives God's daughters a welcome,
They never fail to bless him, they hear him calling upon them.
Woe to the man that drives them away and roughly denies them!
Calling upon Cronides they pray their Father to send down
Sin to him and punish him for Sin's sake and to avenge them.
So, Achileus, I pray you, be courteous unto the daughters
Of the divine Cronides: respect wins over the wisest.
Had not Atrides made you immense gifts, had not Atrides
Named many more to follow, if he went on venting his anger,

I never now would beg you to lay by manly resentment
Or to assist Danaans howe'er they needed assistance;
But when he makes you offers like these, with greater behind them,
And he selects and sends you the noblest of the Achaeans,
Whom you regard most highly, to seek peace and to beseech you,
Surely you should listen and not slight them, neither account them
Sent on a foolish errand. Hitherto to be angry became you.
Consider it more deeply—be counsell'd. Let not a demon
Tempt you to this bitter course. 'Twill tax your power to save them
After the first galleys are in flames. Come, while the Achaeans
Are offering you presents; and they will worship Achilleus.
If you refuse and enter the fierce fight after refusing,
Look to be slightly honour'd, although your bravery saves them.'

Then the gallant Achileus spake once more, saying in answer:
'Old Phoenix, I want not honours from sons of Achaia;
Let me be rather honour'd by judgements of the immortal
Master, as I sit among my ships. That glory attends me,
While breath is in the body, while knees have power to bear me.

There is a trick, moreover, which I must have you beware of.
Cease henceforth to provoke me, to chafe my temper with endless
Whimpering and snivelling to oblige Agamemnon Atrides,
Lest loving him too dearly you lose your master's affection.
'Twere better if you cherish'd my friends, not people who hate me.
Share as of old my glory—be chief in Phthia beside me.
You shall abide therefore and sleep here, and the remainder
Shall carry back the message. At daybreak shall we bethink us
Further, if it fits us to remain or sail for Achaia.'

Here Achileus by raising his eyebrows sign'd to Patroclos
Mutely, to set Phoenix his bed forth, that the remaining
Ambassadors might haply be moved to an early departure.
So the son of Telamon, lord Ajax, turn'd to Odysseus.

'Shall we depart, Laertiádes, wise-hearted Odysseus,
Seeing it is manifest that talking will not avail us?
Ours is a fruitless errand. Now, therefore, seek we the council
Hastily and carry home our news, although it is evil,
Since Danaans sit yonder awaiting us. As for Achilleus,

Look you, he is resolute, his ruthless temper is unchanged.
Cruel! He recks nothing of that love wherewith the Achaeans
So reverenced and loved him, he had no rival amongst us.
Ah, savage heart! How often a man's accepted atonement,
Even if his brother or his son lies cruelly murder'd,
And has allowed their slayer to go free, after receiving
Boot for it, and pacified his grief and anger against him,
Taking a mere blood-fine. What an evil temper the Lord has
Made you of, if you cannot be appeased for losing a maiden,
Though Agamemnon offers seven handmaids lovelier even
And many greater presents! Achileus, I pray you, be gracious
Unto us and reverence this roof. Here stand we beneath it,
Chosen of all Danaans as friends most likely to please you,
And we believe you love us not least of noble Achaeans.'

Then the gallant Achileus spake once more, saying in answer:
'Worthy son of Telamon, lord Ajax, marshal of armies,
Up to a point you've reason in all this—that we allow you.
But the swelling passion in my breast boils up to remember

How Agamemnon scorn'd me before the Achaean assembly
Like a wretched foreigner, one with no standing amongst you.
Go your ways therefore and bear your Ruler the final
Answer as I utter it. Say, I mean not to be pester'd
With bloody war and slaughter, before victorious Hector
Comes blackening the galleys with flame and slaughtering Argives
Up to the Myrmidones' encampment where we await him.
Once he assails the vessels and camping-place of Achilleus,
Hector, as I flatter me, will turn home ere he desires to.'

After a drink offering to the Lord the remainder departed
And threaded all the galleys, following their leader Odysseus.
Calling in his comrades and slave-girls master Patroclos
Bade them make Phoenix his couch and hasten about it.
And listening to his order the damsels speedily made it,
Laying him out linen and warm blankets over a sheep-skin,
That Phoenix might slumber at ease till morning awoke him.
But the son of Peleus went meanwhile into the warmest
Corner to take rest there with Phorbas' daughter beside him,

Even a fair bond-slave from Lesbos, call'd Diomeda.
And on a couch opposite Patroclos slept with a shapely
Slave-girl call'd Iphis, given him by noble Achilleus
After he captured Scyros, a hill stronghold of Enyeus.

As the baffled envoys came into the tent of Atrides,
All the Achaean princes who sat there, rose to receive them,
Holding aloft wine-cups of gold and questioning of them
Eagerly; and the Monarch himself spake asking a question.

'What does he say, wise-hearted Odysseus—pride of Achaia? 560
And will he save the galleys from fierce fire, as we beseech him,
Or does he cling to his anger, refusing roundly to help us?'

So he address'd Odyseus, who spake thus, saying in answer:
'Most valiant and mighty monarch, Agamemnon Atrides,
Know that Achilleus' anger is unquench'd—nay, he is even
Angrier: your peace-gifts he rejects and bids you defiance:
Tells you to consider in yourself or in the Assembly
How to preserve the vessels and whole host of the Achaeans:
Says that he sails moreover for his part after the sunrise,

Launching his own many-oar'd galleys and setting out for Achaia:
Bids the remainder of us to depart home, even as he does,
And tarry here no longer; the hope of capturing Ilium
Has manifestly vanished: for Zeus, extending his awful
Hand, covereth the city and new hope nerves the defenders.
Such was Achilleus' answer. The rest will tell you the same tale.
Ask Ajax—ask either herald, our trusty attendants,
Only we left Phoenix to repose there under his orders.
Since he departs to-morrow, he commands Phoenix to attend him
Home, if his heart be willing. There 's no compulsion about it.'

Such was Odysseus' answer: the chiefs were mightily silent
After it. His passionate response completely abash'd them.
Nobody found any words, all sat there deeply dejected,
Till Diomedes rose and spoke out loud as a trumpet.

'Most valiant and mighty monarch, Agamemnon Atrides,
It was a most terrible mistake, entreating Achilleus
And proffering the presents. Achileus by nature is always
Haughty,—you encourage him to be haughtier if you beseech him.

Leave him alone, I pray you, to sail home or to remain here,
Just as his heart inclines him. He *will* fight, thereof assure you,
Either when his spirit is so bent or God shall arouse him.
Come therefore, I pray you, adopt my counsel, Achaeans.
First let us all go slumber—we need sleep after the banquet.
Both refresh our bodies and our minds, when wearied in action.
But when again to-morrow we behold Dawn's fiery fingers,
Marshal us at the vessels, chariots and spearmen in order,
Then to the fight, heading us yourself, Agamemnon Atrides.'
All the Achaean princes, applauding Lord Diomedes
Loudly, resolved straightway to adopt this counsel he gave them.
So with a drink-offering to the Lord they parted asunder
And spread amongst the vessels, suffering sweet slumber to bless them.

III

THE ARGUMENT

This passage opens at the moment of supreme crisis on the day following the Embassy to Achilleus. The Trojans have carried the Achaean camp and at one point actually penetrated to the galleys. Ajax standing upon the galley of Protesilaos is holding back the Trojan assault, led by Hector.

III

NOW ever as the battle grew deadlier and the Achaeans
Toil'd to defend the vessel, Patroclos, standing afar off
By the son of Peleus, wept hot tears fast as a fountain
Rains from a dark precipice, scattering like mist to the breezes:
And Achileus at length was moved on seeing his anguish
And pityingly utter'd these wing'd words unto Patroclos.

'How now, wherefore weep you, Patroclos, just as a baby
Girl, running after Mother, that weeps and wants to be lifted
And catches at the woman's petticoats and strives to detain her,
Gazing up all tear-stained, till lifted finally by her?
Such you appear, Patroclos, who look so tearfully at me.

Bear you the Myrmidones bad tidings? Have you to break me
Some bitter news from Phthia, some evil nobody knows of?
There 's nothing ails your father, Menoetios, if the reports are
True of him; and Peleus' son of Aeacos,—he is alive yet;
Either of whom would cost us a sore pang, were we to lose him.
Or is it only sorrow to behold the defeated Achaeans
Thus perish at the vessels, as they right richly deserve to?
Speak out! Hide nothing in your thoughts but tell me the reason.'

Then with a most bitter groan he replied thus, saying in answer:
'O Achileus, the son of Peleus and pride of Achaia,
Blame me not. How terrible their plight is, luckless Achaeans!
All the gallant warriors, upon whom they formerly trusted,
Lie stricken at the vessels, sore hurt and fearfully mangled.
There the son of Tydeus lies wounded, brave Diomedes;
Wounded is our Sovereign Agamemnon; wounded Odysseus;
Eurypylos goes halting, a bow has wounded him also.
Our cunningest physicians ev'n now are toiling about them,
Binding their wounds up. But what cares cruel Achilleus!

I never wish to cherish such proud and moody resentment,
Magnificent but deadly! What unborn nation await you,
Champion, if you cannot keep black shame from the Achaeans!
Ah, savage heart! Peleus was not your father, Achilleus,
Your mother lady Thetis: but grey sea water begat you
On the rugged sea-cliffs. Your soul is cruel as either.
If the divine oracles restrain you from entering action,
Or any warning utter'd by God to the lady who bore you,
I am at hand, Achileus—send *me* forth with the remaining
Myrmidones to attend me, that I may rescue the Argives:
Lend me withal your armour that I may wear it about me:
Seeing it, our enemies maybe shall think me Achilleus
And hesitate, thus affording a short space for the Achaean
Army to get breath again. Few breathing-spaces in action!
Their warriors are weary, but ours fresh. Trust me to drive them
Easily from the vessels and tents to the shelter of Ilium.'

So he besought in blindness of heart, not knowing his evil
Destiny, how bitter death lay in this favour he pray'd for.

And Achileus was deeply troubled, thus saying in answer:

'How now, Patroclos, my comrade, you have amazed me!
Neither divine oracles restrain me, that I am aware of,
Nor any warning utter'd by Zeus to the lady who bore me:
Nay, but it is bitterness which makes my temper relentless,
Seeing a man snatch away my prize though I am of equal
Dignity, and despoil me because he's stronger than I am.
After the great hardships I've borne, that fills me with anguish.
'Twas the Achaean people who chose and gave me the maiden:
Storming a fenced city, with my spear I made her a captive;
And Agamemnon robs me, he takes her shamefully from me
As from a mere foreigner, one with no standing amongst us.
We will allow bygones to be bygones, seeing it is not
Good to be wroth forever; though I was firmly determined
Not to relax anywise my wrath, until the defeat was
Deadlier, and the battle came thundering up to the ships here.
Go yourself straightway and put my armour upon you,
Order the Myrmidones yourself and march to the rescue.

There is a black storm-cloud of Trojans yonder surrounding
And pressing on the vessels, and small space have the Achaeans
Left to defend: their army is hemm'd in close to the breakers.
Look you, the whole city is pour'd forth and marches against them
Hardily. They see not my burnish'd vizor approaching.
One flash of it would scare them away thence, fleeing affrighted
And filling all the ditches with slain. Oh, had the Atrides
Been but a kind Sovereign! But now is his army surrounded,
And we behold no longer the dread spear of Diomedes
Raging in his terrible right hand to defend the Achaeans;
And we can hear no longer the war-cry of the Atrides
Sound from his hateful throat. But shouts of merciless Hector
Burst ever louder about me: the Trojans, whooping in answer,
Master the field utterly and break the defeated Achaeans.
Yet never fear—fall boldly upon their army, Patroclos.
Save the Achaean navy at all costs—strike to prevent them
Burning it and cutting off our means of safely returning.
But listen, I entreat you, before all: only obey me

And you procure me honour thereby and win me abundant
Worship of all Danaans: they will restore me the maiden,
They took away, and make me atonement into the bargain.
After you free the galleys, come straight home. Even if Hera's
Lord, crashing in the Heavens, shall bestow victory on you,
Do not attempt to follow your foes up nor to defeat them
Further without Achileus: 'twill dim my glory to do so.
Nor led away by gaining a victory and the desire of
Slaughter, proceed yet further to make any venture on Ilium,
Lest unawares there meet you a champion out of Olympos,
Arm'd in immortality: Phoebos loves dearly the Trojans.
After having driven off this cloud hanging over the warships,
Turn back again and leave them a fair field, there to debate it.
Would to divine Cronides, to Athene and to Apollon,
That not a single fighter of Ilium or of Achaia
'Scaped the common butchery; that we two only, Patroclos,
Lived to assail the city and burst Troy's girdle asunder.'

While Achileus talk'd unto Patroclos, glorious Ajax

Was shot against so fiercely, he could no longer abide it;
For the will of Cronides and darts, which Trojan assailants
Fast flung at him, subdued him. His helm clang'd, beaten on either
Brow of it, and the flashing cheek-pieces, craftily moulded,
Rang to the leaping arrows; his left arm wearied of always
Holding aloft steadily his blazing buckler before him.
They shot at him, they press'd him—he kept his station against them.
Natheless he fought bitterly for breath now—thickly the sweat-drops
Stream'd from his whole body and ran down—no respite allow'd him,
Foes pressing him, strength failing, as evil mounted on evil.

Aid me, divine Goddesses that abide upon holy Olympos,
In singing of the vessels, how first fell fire upon them.

Hector approach'd Ajax with a sword and, waiting his instant,
Smote the ashen spear-shaft and shore in sunder the handle
Clean, very near the socket. So now Telamonian Ajax
Wielded a pointless spear, whose bronze head, flying afar-off,
Fell clattering to the ground and left its master defenceless.
Ev'n Ajax was shaken. His heart fail'd. God was against him.

Zeus, as appear'd manifest, cut him off from further resistance
And crashing in the Heavens gave victory unto the Trojans.
So he retired, driven off by darts, and fiery torches
Were flung upon the vessel till flame rose wreathing around it
And sprang aloft high over the ship's stern. Noble Achilleus
Noted it and struck his hand on thigh and cried to Patroclos.

'Haste, valiant and knightly Patroclos, leader of horsemen!
There 's a ship already there in flames—I see them ascending!
Our enemies will master the ships and cut the retreat off.
Arm you, Patroclos, quickly, the while I muster the people.'

Scarce tarrying for his order, Patroclos sprang to array him
Hastily in flashing arms; and first fitted over his ankles
Greaves, very finely fashion'd, with clasps of silver to hold them;
Next he did Aeacides' bronze breastplate over his own breast,
Plentifully studded o'er with stars in curious inlay:
Then flung around his shoulders a sword of bronze with a silver
Hilt to it, and a massive round shield of mighty dimensions;
Then set a helmet on him with a crest plumed proudly with horse-hair,

Which nodding high above it struck cold fear in the beholders;
Last he selected a pair of stout spears, suiting his hand-grip,
Not the one Aeacides himself used—nay, he rejected
That massy, mighty weapon; for he knew no single Achaean
Save the son of Peleus himself had power to wield it.
It was an ash, which Cheiron of old had cut from a peak of
Pelion and given it to Achilleus' father to slay men.
And he bad Automedon make haste and harness his horses.
Automedon he honour'd and trusted next to Achilleus,
Trusted in his steadiness to defy any danger beside him.
Automedon placed under the yoke two fiery horses,
Called Balios and Xanthos—a fierce pair, fleet as a tempest,
Born to the swift West-wind Zephyros by Harpy Podarge,
That fed amongst the meadows by earth-encircling Ocean.
Automedon moreover put in side-traces a horse called
Pedasos, whom Achileus had taken in Eëtion's town.
Though but a mortal charger, he kept pace with the immortals.

Now Achileus rush'd over the whole camp, calling his host out

And bidding all arm quickly. The Myrmidon army assembled
Like a devouring wolf-pack, who dare all, fiery-hearted,
And killing on some mountain a tall stag, tear him asunder
Greedily and bloody all their chaps with gorging his entrails;
Then trot away together to the brink of a clear-eddying pool
And delicately dipping their thin tongues into the surface,
Drink at it ere uttering their blood-belch. Each has a dauntless
Heart in him—every belly is swollen nearly to bursting.
Thus wolf-like their army assembled, and the commanders
Crowded around the gallant esquire of noble Achilleus
Eagerly; and Achileus was amongst them, fierce as a War-god
Marshalling his chariots and spears for immediate action.

There were fifty galleys which sail'd out under Achilleus
Unto the Trojan country. In each galley there was a crew of
Fifty men, his followers, that mann'd its benches as oarsmen.
Five warriors he appointed amongst these as the commanders
Each of his own regiment. Achileus ruled over the whole host.
One regiment fought under Menesthios of the flashing mail,

Child of a holy river, sky-born Spercheios's offspring:
His mother was Polydora, the fairest daughter o' Peleus,
Whom the rushing River-god lay with, though only a mortal.
Yet Boros, the son of Perieres, was the reputed
Father, having wedded her: great bride-gifts gave he to gain her.
And a second regiment fought under the brave Eudoros,
Whose mother was Polymela, the graceful daughter o' Phylas,
And had him ere she wedded. Keen Hermes, Slayer of Argus,
Cast loving eyes upon her when he saw her chant in a virgin
Choir to the golden-arrow'd Queen Artemis; and he desired her.
So Hermes climb'd into the upstair-chamber she slept in,
Lay with her in privacy and left his beautiful issue
Planted in her, Eudoros, a swift runner and stern fighter.
After she bore her baby with Eilythuia's assistance
And he beheld daylight and sunshine parted his eyelids,
Lord Échekles, the gallant son of Astor, led Polymela
Home with him and wedded her; for he paid much bride-money for her;
While Phylas look'd after the child and carefully rear'd him,

Gazing on his grandson with a father's tender affection.
There was a third regiment led by Peisander, a child of
Maemalos and valiant as a God; not a Myrmidon of them
Vied with him in spear-craft except their leader Patroclos.
There was a fourth regiment; old Phoenix was the commander;
Alcimedon, the son of Laerkes, led yet a fifth one.
After the Myrmidon army assembled under the leaders
And he beheld their order, Achilleus grimly address'd them.

'Now, men, look you remember to-day how bigly you boasted
While sitting at the vessels, while my wrath kept you inactive;
How you set our enemies at naught, thus grumbling at me.
"Your mother must have rear'd you upon gall, cruel Achilleus!
Keeping us in camp here, your comrades, eager for action!
We'd better man the vessels and sail home unto Achaia
Straight, if an evil temper is always so to possess you."
Thus muttering together, you reproach'd me. Well, here is an action
Raging—a most bloody one. You desired this—now you behold it.
On then, Myrmidones, and smite me the armies of Ilium.'

Now Achileus roused ardour in each heart while he address'd them,
And as his army listen'd, they closed up grimlier even.
Close as a man, when building a great house, fits the cemented
Stones, one against the other, to prevent wind finding an entrance,
So the flashing morions and shields fitted either to either.
Buckler was hard on buckler, on helm helm, armour on armour,
So that at each nodding of their crests, plumed proudly with horsehair,
There was a clang, so closely the men stood shoulder to shoulder.
Far to the fore rode knightly Patroclos, blazing in armour,
And the good Automedon, with one thought only between them,
How to set on foremost and lead their army in action.
Now Achileus, rushing into a tent, threw open a rich chest,
His mother lady Thetis pack'd up for him, ere he departed,
And put aboard the vessel, filling it with clothing of all kinds,
Cloaks to defy weather in, soft carpets, easy to lie on.
There was a gold wine-bowl kept there, which nobody handled
Saving him; and Achileus himself used neither to drink from
Neither to make offerings of wine to the deities out of,

Save to the Lord Almighty. He took this beaker, he cleansed it
Carefully with brimstone, and rinsing it in the running stream
Bore it in his washen hands and drew wine. Therewith Achilleus
Went to the mid-courtyard and made libation, appealing
And looking up to Heaven, to the Lord of Thunder who heard him.

'Zeus, dwelling in Dodona, remote lord of the Pelasgi,
Prince of a wild and stormy dominion, where the diviners,
Foul-footed and bedding on bare earth, lie watchful around thee.
Ev'n as thou didst hear me aforetime calling upon thee
And to avenge Achileus did'st smite me the host of Achaeans,
So suffer now my further desire to be duly accomplish'd.
I tarry at the vessels: my comrade and the remaining
Myrmidones are marching afield. Oh grant him a signal
Victory in the battle, thou wide-brow'd Father Cronion!
Strengthen him, encourage him this day, that merciless Hector
May live assured hereafter if he, our faithful attendant,
Is cunning in the battle when alone, or only appears so,
Dyeing his hands in slaughter, when I go conquering also.

After he frees the galleys from surge and thunder of onset,
Send me him, O Cronides, unwounded back to the warships;
Leading in his followers from fight and wearing his armour.'

Such was Achilleus' prayer. The All-wise Deity heard him,
And he denied one portion of it, yet granted a portion:
Since he let his comrade Patroclos rescue the warships,
While he refused Achileus to behold him safely returning.
After the wine was offer'd and pray'r made, noble Achilleus
Took the cup and carried to the tent and laid it away there,
And coming out, went unto a clear space, over against it,
Whence to behold encounter the Trojans and the Achaeans.

Thereupon his followers, all muster'd under Patroclos,
March'd at his order given, full of heart and eager to conquer,
Pouring along valiant, as wasps pour out of a wayside
Bank in a place, where children at all hours pester the creatures;
Stirring up and scoffing at their nest built over the pathway,
Until a public danger the wanton mischievous urchins
Make of it. Oft it happens that a luckless stranger alarms them,

Passing in all innocence, and fierce swarms, furious-hearted,
Fly valiantly at him to defend their children against him.
In such a warlike temper the whole host under Patroclos
Pour'd from amongst the galleys: their roar like thunder resounded.
High above all other shouts they heard their leader appealing.

'On, ye Myrmidones, followers of noble Achilleus!
Show yourselves men now, call up your fiery fierceness.
Ye have a chief's honour in your charge—your chief is a peerless
Champion—his followers must not disgrace him in action.
Make arrogant Agamemnon Atrides blush to remember
How he regarded lightly the bravest of the Achaeans.'

With this appeal Patroclos aroused wild ardour amongst them.
All in a mass together they bore down into the Trojans
And the vessels rang again to the wild yells of the Achaeans.

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IV

THE ARGUMENT

Patroclos after saving the Achaean galleys and driving back the Trojan army to the very gates of Troy is there slain by Hector with the assistance of Phoebos. The arms of Achilleus are stripped from the body of Patroclos which is then recovered by the Achaeans and borne with difficulty towards their camp. The retreat is rapidly becoming a rout at the point when the following passage commences.

IV

WHILE the remainder battled like fierce flames over Patroclos,
Antilochos ran quickly to bear his master the tidings;
And he beheld Achileus stand near his towering-horn'd ships,
Foreshadowing the disaster which had too truly befallen.
There with a dark foreboding he cried out unto his own heart,
'What can, alas, have happen'd? And wherefore are the Achaeans
Thus driven on the galleys once more and shamefully routed?
May God avert the sorrow, I fear, is fallen upon me.
My mother has forewarn'd me of all this—told me the bravest
Myrmidon, in battling with Trojans, was to be cast forth
From the blesséd sunlight, and I should live to behold it.

I am afraid Patroclos is ev'n now fallen in action.
Out on him! I told him to return here after repulsing
Those that assail'd the galleys, not go encountering Hector.'

While he remain'd thus searching his heart and fearfully doubting,
Antilochos, the son of Nestor, came up to Achilleus
And passionately sobbing brought news of a deadly disaster.

'Woe's me, Pelides! I bear news which will afflict you
Deeply, when I utter it. God knows it grieves me to bear it.
Oh, Achileus, they've slain Patroclos! There is a fierce fight
Over the bare body there; and Hector's taken his armour.'

At the report agony like dark mist clouded his eyesight,
And with a cry he gather'd black dust and cast it in handfuls
Over him, and sullied his bright brows by heaping it on them,
Until his whole apparel was black with a coating of ash-dust.
Down Achileus crashing into the dust lay mightily fallen,
Tearing up and scattering those locks so lovely of olden.
Slave-women, whom Patroclos had help'd his master to capture,
Shriek'd as if in terror of their lives upon hearing his outcry,

And rushing out together beat their breasts over Achilleus
In such a deadly panic, their knees could scarcely support them.
Meanwhile Antilochos knelt weeping, wailing amongst them,
And with his hands held tightly the wrists of groaning Achilleus,
Fearful of his plucking out his steel and cleaving his own throat.
His mother heard the sorrow they made, deep under the water,
And sitting, as she listen'd, with her aged father beside her,
Lifted up her voice there and wept. And every immortal
Nereid, whose dwelling is deep seas, came crowding about her,
And filling all the cavern, beat their breasts, bearing a burden
Unto the words their sister Thetis sang wailing amongst them.

'Oh, listen, all ye daughters o' Nereus. I will acquaint you
Faithfully with the sorrows which wring me, if only you hearken.
Woe 's me! How wretched is my fate in bearing a peerless
Champion—I who travail'd with brave, with stainless Achilleus,
Matchless among warriors. He shot upwards, clean as a sapling;
He was a brave fruit-tree, rear'd in my sheltering orchard.
I put him on the vessels, I sent him forth to the siege of

Ilium and the battle—never, ah, never after to greet him
Home from it in the dwellings of Peleus, where we await him.
While yet amongst the living, while sunlight warms him, affliction
Vexes him; and visiting my child I may not avail him.
Ne'ertheless I'll visit him, my darling, if only to ask him
And to be told wherefore he laments, though lying inactive.'

His mother left the cavern with these words, being attended
By the sobbing sea-nymphs, and waves fell foaming asunder
As the goddess footed it to the fertile kingdom of Ilium.
One following the other, they landed close to Achilleus,
Where the thronging warships lay beach'd in a cluster about him.
Lo, as he lay uttering deep groans, there stood she before him,
His mother; and she utter'd one shriek, and tenderly clasping
Her son about the forehead spake thuswise unto Achilleus:

'Child, what is all your weeping about? What makes you lament so?
Tell me the cause, I pray you. The Lord has surely accomplish'd
What you desired so greatly, you sought so eagerly after!
See, the Achaean people is hemm'd in close to the ships' sterns

Yonder—it is suffering disgrace and danger without you.'

Then with a most bitter groan Achileus spoke saying in answer:

'Yes, mother, all he promised to accomplish, Zeus hath accomplish'd.
True! But have I pleasure in such things when losing a comrade—
Losing a friend far dearer than all friends—dearer than even
My very life—Patroclos! He lies slain. Hector who slew him,
Took from him our magic arms—that suit of marvellous armour,
Which was a wonder given King Peleus by the Immortals
That very day they led you to wed with a mortal of earth's race.
'Twere better had you tarried with sea-nymphs under the waters,
If Peleus in taking a bride had chosen a mortal,
Since as it is, need drives me to wring you with infinite anguish,
Pain for a son perishing soon, soon! Never shall you receive me
Safe back again in Phthia; because shame will not allow me
Still to live and look upon mankind, excepting if Hector
Is to be slain straightway and my spear only to slay him
And to avenge upon him that his hand dared slaughter Patroclos.'

His mother lady Thetis shed tears, thus saying in answer:

'Look for a short life, child, if this be spoken in earnest.
After the slaying of Hector, a like doom early awaits you.'
And Achileus made answer with heartfelt noble emotion.
'No matter, let me perish. My friend died early as I do,
Neither did I succour him. Patroclos died in a distant
Country, yet I came not to his aid when he needed assistance.
Well then, as I am not to return home—so you assure me—
And have, alas, saved neither Patroclos nor the remaining
Myrmidones, who perish'd by scores encountering Hector,
But sat amongst the vessels as a useless burden on earth's breast,
I, that am of quality unlike other sons of Achaia
In bloody fight,—let others speak wiselier in the assembly!—
Oh, blot it out of Heaven, vile Strife; let nobody henceforth
Hear of it; or bitter wrath, which triumphs over the wisest,
Sweeter than oozing honey, while entering into a man's breast,
And spreading in the bosom like smoke, once finding an entrance:
Such bitter wrath as seized me against Agamemnon Atrides!
We will allow bygones to be bygones, though we deplore them,

Mastering our swelling hearts that fight so fiercely against us,
Now let us out to battle, where my friend's slayer awaits me,
Hector! If I fall there, I fall there. Let the Immortals
Order it, and Cronides, their Ruler, appoint me the season.
None can avoid death, lady. Not Heracles could avoid it.
He was a great warrior, King Zeus once mightily loved him,
And yet he had to perish by Fate and hatred of Hera.
I, if a like death-doom is mine, must bow me as he did
Into the dust. First let me achieve some noble achievement!
Let me afford a widow of Troy or daughter of Ilium
Cause to brush off bitter tears with both hands, wiping her eyelids
And pretty cheeks, and raising a wild wail over the fallen:
Make them aware Achileus has long been lying inactive!
Hinder me not, loving as thou art—I may not obey thee.'

His mother, silver-footed sea-nymph, spake saying in answer:
'Nay, Achileus, 'tis wisely resolved and worthily of you,
Not to allow followers and friends to be shamefully slaughter'd.
Only the foe is master of all your beautiful armour,

And the flashing panoply of bronze bright-helmeted Hector
Wears for his own and glories in it. Yet he glories a short while
Only, as I prophesy, for his own doom closes about him.
Now, Achileus, I'm going away. Let nobody tempt you
Into the fight. Tarry here until you behold me returning.
I'll come again to-morrow at sunrise after procuring
From the divine Hephaestos a suit of marvellous armour.'

Thus the Goddess pacified her child and turning, address'd her
Unto the nymphs her sisters, who yet stood waiting her orders.

'Ye Goddesses, vanish into the wide bosom of the immense sea,
And visiting the cavern where our old father awaits us,
Speak with him and tell him of this chance. I go to Olympos,
There to beseech Hephaestos, if *he* will swiftly provide me
Marvellous and flashing arms to array my darling Achilleus.'

Thereupon all the others passed downwards under the waters
As she desired. But lady Thetis climb'd unto Olympos,
Thence to provide Achileus with a suit of marvellous armour.

Thus the goddess footed it to Olympos. But the Achaeans

Gave with a wild clamour of despair to the charges of Hector
And driven on the galleys fought once more close to the water.
Those warriors of Achaia, who yet fought over Patroclos,
Strove to drag his body out of shot, but could not effect it,
Ere chariots and footmen again swept up to the carcase,
Led to the charge by Hector who fought like fire before them.
Thrice springing at Patroclos, he fasten'd unto his ankles
And tugging hard, thrice shouted aloud to the armies of Ilium;
Thrice the twin Aiantes, putting out their powers against him,
Sent him away staggering. But he came on fiercelier always,
Now flung him at the thick of Danaans, now waited his instant,
Thundering his war-cry—never gave ground after he gain'd it.
As men who watch the cattle, can nowise frighten a lion
Back from a beast's carrion which he hungers mightily after,
So the twins Aiantes, though stout, strove vainly to keep him
From springing on the body and scare off Hector of Ilium.
He was about to have it by main force, gaining a matchless
Victory, when wind-swift Iris rushing out of Olympos

Swoop'd to arouse Achileus by instant order of Hera,
Neither divine Cronides himself nor yet the Immortals
Being aware. There stood she before him, thus she address'd him:
'Are you the great Achileus, that passing marvellous hero?
Up then, rescue Patroclos! A fierce fight rages about him
Yonder before the galleys. Men slay men, falling in hundreds
Over the dead body of your friend—one party defending,
One struggling to win him. Your foes fight madly to hale him
Home to the windy city: but most their champion Hector
Longs to drag his body off, for he gloats on smiting asunder
That neck of his, then fixing his head there over the gateway.
Up! Dally here no longer. Does it not shake you to think of?
His body cast as offal to the dogs! Shame, shame be upon you,
If you allow the body to be dragg'd there and to be outraged.'
Thus she besought Achileus, who replied by asking a question.
'Iris, what God is it that sends thee so to command me?'
Then she replied readily, wind-swift, tempestuous Iris,
'Hera, the Lord's consort and Queen, despatch'd me, Achilleus.

Neither the crown'd Sovereign, Cronides, nor yet the Immortals
Know of it, as many as there be on snow-clad Olympos.'

But the son of Peleus spake once more, saying in answer,
'How can a man go fighting, if his foes capture his armour?
My mother too has warn'd me against my entering action
Ere she returns to-morrow. I stay here till she procures me
From the divine Hephaestos a suit of marvellous armour.
Nobody owns any arms which fit me, that I am aware of,
Though Ajax, the son of Telamon, might lend me a buckler.
Only he needs it yonder,—he fights there over Patroclos,
Standing in our forefront and dealing slaughter about him.'

Swift, tempestuous Iris again spoke saying in answer:
'Though well aware your armour is all lost, yet we command you,
Go to the trench, Achileus, and show yourself to the Trojans,
That terrified to behold you, the foe may waver an instant
And hesitate, thus affording a brief space for the Achaean
Army to get breath again. Few breathing-spaces in action!'

And vanishing thereafter, she flew home unto Olympos.

Up then arose Achileus and up rose Maiden Athene
And flung about his shoulders her own victorious aegis.
Over his head that mighty Goddess set wreathing a golden
Cloud, from amidst whose brightness a flame of fire proceeded.
As when a cloud of smoke goes upwards out of an island,
Sent from a far city in distress; for an army surrounds it
And the defenders of it, though hard-press'd, beat the assaults off
Painfully from daybreak till dusk; and after the sunset,
One following the other, fires flame forth into the darkness
And redden all the Heavens for a sign to the neighbouring islands,
They should arise, gather all their ships and row to the rescue;
So to the heights of Heaven that fire blazed over Achilleus.
Now Achileus, coming unto the trench, kept under the rampart,
Mindful of his mother's hest, and mix'd not with the Achaeans,
But stood apart and shouted. Athene shouted afar off,
Answering, and a terror past speech came over the Trojans.
Clear as a trumpet-blast which peals out, sounding a signal
For the assault to savage warriors who beleaguer a fortress,

So very clear and deadly the shout peal'd out of Achilleus.
Fear took away their senses who hearkened unto the brazen
Sound of it, and chariots and all, their fiery horses
Whirl'd them about, terrified; their souls knew evil approaching.
Dread fell upon their drivers who saw gigantic Achilleus
Stand with a flame above him, which burnt unwearying, awful
Over him at the bidding of grey-eyed Maiden Athene.
Thrice Achileus lean'd over the trench and mightily shouted,
Thrice the allied Lycians and Trojans reel'd in amazement:
Twelve warriors of prowess, who led them, died as he shouted,
Falling amongst chariots and spears. And now the Achaeans
Dragg'd the batter'd body out of range and thankfully bore it
Unto a bier to carry. His comrades crowded about it
Mournfully and Achileus himself walked after the bearers,
Weeping aloud bitterly to behold his faithful attendant
Borne back upon men's shoulders, a cold corpse, cruelly mangled.
With chariots and horses he sent him forth to the conflict,
Whom he received otherwise and saw not safely returning.

Down the sun, Heëlios, by instant order of Hera,
Though he was unwilling and unspent, sank into the waters.
And the gallant Danaans had rest now after the sunset
From the din of battle and from close-fought desperate action.

V

DAWN in a crocus mantle arose up from the remote seas,
Pouring pale light forth on mankind and the Immortals,
As she return'd, carrying the divine gifts unto the warships.

And she beheld Achileus outstretch'd there over Patroclos
And passionately sobbing, with a crowd of people around him
Gazing on and sorrowing. The Goddess came into the circle
And took his hand and held it in hers and bade him awaken.

'Leave we the dead body of that man, child, though we lament him
Deeply. He had to perish—God doom'd him from the commencement.
Look what a lovely present Hephaestos sends you! Receive it
Gratefully, for never has man worn such marvellous armour.'

Thus she address'd Achileus; and therewith cast she before him
All the clanging panoply which rang loud, angrily gleaming.
Fear fell on all the others to behold it; no man amongst them
Dared to set eyes upon it; they all shrank. Only Achilleus
Gazed on it, and terribly his wrath rose while he beheld it,
So that his eyes blazed awful as if live fire was in them.
And he rejoiced, picking up God's gifts and handling of them.
After he had gratified his soul by gazing upon them,
Turning around he utter'd these wing'd words, saying in answer:

'Yes, mother, here is truly a God's work; only a deathless
Deity could fashion it. This passes human achievement.
I will array me in it. But meanwhile I have a dreadful
And bitter fear lest shortly, when I leave goodly Patroclos,
Flies settle on the gashes which bronze left gaping asunder
And he becomes horrible through worms engendering in them.
After a man's spirit is torn forth, flesh turns to corruption.'

Quickly the silver-footed sea-nymph spake saying in answer:
'Son, suffer not so idle a fear any longer to grieve you.

I have a way to baffle those fierce tribes of the devouring
Flies, which attack the flesh of warriors when fallen in action.
Though you allow the body to remain here over a twelvemonth
It shall appear utterly unchanged or comelier even.
Call to the public assembly the heroes of the Achaeans,
There to renounce your anger against Agamemnon Atrides:
Arm you then and sally forth, cloth'd in your fiery fierceness.'

Thus she set his valour all in flame and made him a giant.
And she preserved the body from change by pouring immortal
Balsam in its nostrils, ambrosia and ruddy nectar.

Forth Achileus strode over the sands and shingle of Ocean,
Thundering out a summons to the heroes of the Achaeans:
Whereupon all officers that abode there under the warships,
Those governing the tillers of ships and serving as helmsmen
Or giving out the rations as stewards over the sailors,
Throng'd to the place of Assembly. For all knew mighty Achilleus
After a long tarriance from fight was appearing amongst them.
Two warriors, the son of Tydeus and noble Odysseus,

Stay'd them upon spear-shafts and came in painfully limping
After the rest: trouble of their wounds kept either behindhand.
They sat upon the settles in a front row of the Assembly.
Last to arrive was royal Atrides, lord Agamemnon.
He had a hurt likewise. For Cöon, casting a bronze-shod
Spear at him in the mellay, had wounded royal Atrides.
When the Achaean people had all been duly assembled,
Up then arose Achileus and spake out, standing amongst them.
'What good has either of us gain'd by contending, Atrides?
Neither have I profited nor you. Our anger devour'd us,
Leaving us only sorrow and mad strife over a maiden.
Artemis, had the arrow thou shootest, slain her aboard us
When pillaging Lyrnēssos, of old I made her a bond-slave,
Fewer of our Danaans had gone down into the dust of
Ilium and bitten earth through my untimely resentment!
That was a sheer godsend to the Trojans; but the Achaeans
Have bitter cause to remember Achilleus' strife with Atrides.
We will allow bygones to be bygones, though we deplore them,

Mastering our swelling hearts that fight so fiercely against us.
I put away all anger from henceforth, seeing it is not
Good to be implacable. Now therefore swiftly array us
And let us out to battle, ye unshorn sons of Achaia!
Loose me on our enemies and see if an army of Ilium
Means to come and bivouack by our ships! I have a notion
That many knees are shortly to find rest mightily welcome,
After the race for safety before my furious onslaught!'

All warriors of Achaia, who heard, burst into rejoicings
When the son of Peleus had announced that his anger was ended.
Their Sovereign Agamemnon arose next, fain to address them.

'Heroes and warriors! Good comrades! Sons of Achaia!
Surely when I get upon my feet 'tis seemly to hear me
Not clamour and disturb me. The ablest speaker is helpless!
When many men keep making an uproar, who can address you?
Who can attend? Eloquence is lost when nobody hears it.
'Tis the son of Peleus I speak to: let all the remainder
Hear the reply I make him, attending carefully to it.

Sir, many tongues have told me the same tale: I am accounted
Solely to blame, Achileus. I am not truly the culprit.
Destiny and Cronides and night-enshrouded Erinys
Are to be blamed: *they* roused me to mad wrath in the Assembly
Whereupon I tyrannized and took your maiden, Achilleus.
How otherwise? God caused me to sin: God accomplishes all things.
Eldest of God's daughters is Ate, balefully blinding
All of us. And delicate her feet are, and she proceeds not
Walking upon solid earth but men's heads whom she seduces.
And, Achileus, I was not alone in falling a victim!
Well, folly found me willing—God sent this madness upon me:
I therefore shall make you amends and ample atonement.
Only arise to battle; breathe fresh might into the people.
Those many gifts I give you which I bade noble Odysseus
Tell you of and proffer in your tent last evening also.
If you agree to tarry for awhile, though eager for action,
Let me command the presents to be borne here by the attendants,
Lest you behold anything which may not please you amongst them.'

And Achileus made answer again and said to Atrides,
'Most valiant and mighty Atrides, prince of Achaia!
Do as it is fitting in your judgment, either withholding
Or giving us the presents. But now, now, only array us
And bring us out to battle. We remain here talking about it
And spinning out the matter, when a great task is to accomplish.
Oh, to behold Achileus yet once more head the Achaeans
And batter in the phalanx with spear till he burst it asunder!
Think of it, and tackle each your Trojan, glorying in me!'

Here the man of stratagems uprose, cunning-hearted Odysseus.
'You, Achileus, are hardy, we all know. But we beseech you
Not to bid us Danaans encounter the armies of Ilium
Fighting on empty bellies. The affair will scarcely be ended
Speedily, when battle is once join'd and army with army
Lock'd in a deadly wrestle, God breathing fury in either.
Nay, sir, bid Danaans sit down first under the warships,
Making a full meal there. That puts heart into a fighter!
Nobody whose belly is not fill'd, can do you his utmost

Or carry on the battle from sunrise unto the sunset.
Even if his spirit is still bent on fighting his hardest,
Sloth unawares creeps over a man's limbs; hunger besets him,
He has a thirst upon him; knees give way weakly beneath him.
Yet give a man but plenty to eat and wine in abundance,
He 's fit enough for fighting a whole day, if you require him,
Keeping a good spirit up, not wearying under his armour,
Waiting Atrides's order to discontinue the action.
So suffer us, we beseech you, to go home and to prepare us
Our dinner at the vessels. But first, Agamemnon Atrides
Ought to fetch his gifts forth and place them for the Achaeans
All to behold properly: and that should soothe you, Achilleus.
Next let Atrides swear you a great oath, standing amongst us,
Saying he has never touch'd your maid nor carnally known her.
After his oath, your temper, Achilleus, ought to be melted.
Lastly let our Sovereign in his own tent make you a banquet
Lest anything be lacking to the full reparation he owes you.
And other folk shall find you, Atrides, juster towards them

After it. And never think it shames you. For even a Ruler
So he began the quarrel, should make his victim atonement.'

His Sovereign Agamemnon again rose, saying in answer:
'It gratifies us greatly to hear your counsel, Odysseus,
Since you thresh each matter out and lay things clearly before us.
I am agreed, nay eager, to swear all which you require me;
And never shall forswear me before God. So let Achilleus
Bear with us and tarry here for awhile though eager for action:
And tarry here, the remainder, depart not from the Assembly
Ere we fetch our gifts forth and swear oaths over a victim.
And we desire and charge you, Odysseus, after selecting
Young Danaans to attend you, the noblest of the Achaeans,
Bear hither from the vessel those same gifts which we decided
Were to be sent Achileus last night; and bring me the maidens.
Talthybios, go over the whole camp—strive to procure us
Quickly a swine to offer to the Deity and to the Sungod.'

Up then arose Achileus and cried out unto Atrides.
'Most valiant and mighty Atrides, lord Agamemnon!

Pray you reserve business like this for a future occasion,
After a pause in fighting affords our people a respite
And the flood of passion in my heart is somewhat abated.
All bloody lie their corpses who died by Hector of Ilium
When the divine Cronides disgraced and broke you before him,
And you command our army to eat! Were I the commander,
These warriors of Achaia should all march hungering, empty,
This very hour, to battle till sunset—grimly avenging
Their bitter shame by slaughter, before they made them a banquet!
I anyhow mean neither to drink aught ere we avenge it
Neither to eat anything, while my dead comrade awaits me,
Lying in our tent there, his feet turn'd unto the doorway,
His body hack'd to tatters, his comrades standing around him,
Mourning him! I care not for these things which you debate of,
But bloody war,—grim slaughter—the groans of dying opponents.'

Then the man of stratagems uprose, cunning-hearted Odysseus.
'Mighty son of Peleus, far noblest of the Achaeans!
You, Achileus, are doubtless a great deal stronger than I am

And better in the mellay. So likewise I am a great deal
Wiser: for I know more—my years there give me the vantage.
Lay therefore my answer to heart and be not offended.
Sir, battle is so thankless a crop, men weary to reap it
Speedily: where the sickles cut straw in wond'rous abundance,
Yet gather in so scanty a harvest after the weighing
Of the divine Disposer decides whom victory falls to.
So we can only sorrow not fast too over the fallen,
Since many men die daily—the list of fallen is endless.
Nobody might ever rest from fasting, were we to do so.
Rather let us bury him that falls, and if we lament him,
Weep for a day, not longer. The heart must harden as iron.
War is a hateful business,—a man surviving an action
Must above all other things eat, drink, and strive to preserve him
Fit to renew the battle, to attack foes fiercelier even,
Hard as his own panoply of bronze. Let no man amongst us
Wait for a further summons, Danaans, nor make it a pretext
For tarrying. The summons is now! And woe to the Argive

That tarries at the vessels. Let us all charge shoulder to shoulder
And carry grim destruction amongst horse-tamers of Ilium.'

With these words, Odyseus took Nestor's sons to attend him
And the son of Phyleus and Meriones and Thoas
And Lykomed, the son of Creiontes, and Melanippos.
They hurried off together to Atrides' royal apartments.
There the command given him was accomplish'd speedily by him.
They carried out the tripods and cauldrons—all that Atrides
Told them of—and led away twelve horses, pick'd for Achilleus.
They led away moreover the sev'n slaves, highly accomplish'd
Craftswomen, and Briseis his own maid into the bargain.
First, carrying the talents of gold, came noble Odysseus,
After him his followers, young chieftains of the Achaeans,
Bearing him in the presents. Agamemnon arose to receive them.
Talthybios the herald, whose voice was like an Immortal's,
Rose with him and stood there with a boar-swine, close to Atrides.
Then pulling out the dagger which he wore thrust under the girdle,
Holding up his massy sword, Agamemnon turn'd to the victim

And cut away the bristles from his head; then lifted his hands up
Unto the Lord. The others sat meanwhile, guarding a silence,
Hearkening in reverence to the oath their Ruler address'd them.
Thus, looking up to Heaven so wide, swore royal Atrides:

'By God above, most mighty of all Gods, lord of Immortals;
By the Sun and Mother Earth and by Hell-fury beneath her
That never fails to punish those that swear wrongfully by them!
I never touch'd Briseis, Achilleus, neither approach'd her
Lustfully or otherwise in my tent while she abode there:
But she remain'd utterly unstain'd and leaves it a maiden.
May God, if I have spoken a falsehood, send me the greatest
Woes ever sent a sinner for swearing falsely before him.'

Here the Monarch, pulling out his knife, cut asunder the boar's throat,
And with a heave the herald cast its corpse into the boundless
Water, the wide bosom of white sea, for fish to devour it.
Up then arose Achileus and cried to the people of Argos:
'Lord Zeus, that sufferest men's souls to be evilly blinded,
Ne'er had Atrides roused me to nurse such deadly resentment

Or carried off the woman Briseis wrongfully from me,
Deaf to the pleas of others, had not God from the commencement
Been set upon destroying a great part of the Achaeans!
Go now! Get ready with your meal and arm you for action.'
With these words Achileus dismiss'd the Achaean assembly
And the remainder hurried to the ships dispersing amongst them.
Only the Myrmidones, his warlike company, linger'd
For carrying the presents to the ships of noble Achilleus.
Some carried off and laid them away there; certain attendants
Came thither with the women; some drave steeds unto the pasture.
Crowding around Achileus came chieftains of the Achaeans,
All bidding him to dinner: but he groan'd out and he refused them.
'If you regard my friendship at all, ye sons of Achaia,
Bid me not eat anything nor drink aught, let me beseech you—
Not yet awhile. Too dreadful a grief is fallen upon me.
I shall abide and keep me from all food unto the sunset.'
All other kings of Achaia departed on hearing his answer;
Only the wise Odyseus tarried and both children of Atreus

And reverend Phoenix and Idomeneus and Nestor,
Fain to give him comfort. But naught could comfort Achilleus
Save bloody war, nor lighten his heart save murderous action.
Calling up old memories he lamented, moaning in anguish:
'How many times, sweet comrade, who had so awful an ending
Have you set out dinner in this tent and laid me the table
Cheerfully and readily on fight days when the Achaeans
Arm'd for a fierce encounter against horse-tamers of Ilium!
Now you repose bloody on your bier; and yonder the viands
Wait me, yet I cannot eat; and wine would choke me to drink it,
Thinking of how I've lost you. It had not wrung me with anguish
Deadlier, were the death of Peleus, my father, reported—
Left desolate in Phthia, the big tears burning his eyelids,
Waiting a son that comes not—a son that fights in a far-off
Country to wrest Helena, the abhorr'd, from children of Ilium:
Nor the death of Neoptolemos, my beautiful infant,
Growing up in Scyros (may God there safely preserve him!)
I hitherto kept nursing a vain hope—fondly believing

I was alone to perish far from steed-pasturing Argos
And to remain buried here in Troy! I counted upon you
Bearing him in the vessel from Scyros, safely returning
Home with him and telling all my substance faithfully tó him,
My many great possessions, my slaves and loftily roof'd halls.
King Peleus must either be dead now, as we believe him,
Or if he lingers feebly awhile yet, life is a weary
Burden in his desolate old age, ever mournfully waiting
For the message telling of my death still further to grieve him.'
So he lamented weeping aloud; and each of his hearers
Groan'd likewise to remember his own home left in Achaia;
And the divine Cronides grew compassionate to behold them
And pityingly utter'd these wing'd words unto Athene:
'Child, hast thou utterly cast off thy darling Achilleus?
Hast thou ceased troubling thy thoughts any further about him?
Lo, we behold him seated amongst his towering-horn'd ships,
Wailing a dead friend there. Other chiefs and people of Argos
Are gone away to dinner, yet he sits not tasting a morsel.

Go and bear Achileus ambrosia and strong nectar,
Pouring it in the bosom lest thirst and hunger defeat him.'

So God aroused his daughter, who leapt up, glad to obey him,
And springing out of Heaven through sheer air, went as a wide-wing'd
Falcon, who swoops uttering sharp screams; and seeking Achilleus
Hastily (for the others by now were arming about him)
Pour'd in his heart delicate ambrosia and sweet nectar
Lest Achileus should weaken afield through gnawing of hunger.
Then she return'd to the mansion of high God whence she descended,
As the rush of warriors came from warships of Achaia.
Numberless as snowflakes, God pours forth into the cold air
And Boreas, the nipping North-wind, whirls thickly before him,
So from amongst the vessels their flaming fiery helm-crests
Danced along in myriads to the fight—so thickly the bucklers
Pour'd along and the hammer'd breastplates and lances of ash-wood,
Heav'n was ablaze with glory—the wide earth laughing about them
With the flash and dazzle of their bronze; and deeply the ground shook
Under an army's trample. Achilleus, rising amongst them,

Arm'd likewise. To begin with, he fasten'd over his ankles
Greaves, delicately fashion'd, with clasps of silver to hold them.
Next Achileus put on his breastplate and hasp'd it about him;
Then slung around his shoulders a bronze sword, hung from a sword-belt
And studded o'er with silver; then heav'd on shoulder the mighty
Circle of his massy shield whence light stream'd, bright as a full moon's.
Bright as a great watch-fire which shines out over the water
Unto the eyes of sailors—a watch-fire, high on a mountain,
Burning on in solitude—but storm-winds, rising against them,
Bear them away sorrowing from friends and lose them in Ocean;
So did Achilleus' buckler, the shield of glorious inlay,
Blaze, flashing up to Heaven. Then Achilleus lifted a mighty
Helmet up and fitted it to his head. That beautiful helmet
Danced above him, starlike; thick gold plumes, which the immortal
Armourer had set about its crest, fell streaming around it.
And Achileus made trial of all his glorious armour,
Feeling if it fitted him, giving his limbs freedom of action.
It fitted as the feathers fit a bird—it lifted him upwards!

Next he took his spear down, that spear his father bequeath'd him,
Mighty, massive, terrible; that spear no single Achaean
Had pith enough nor power to wield, excepting Achilleus.
It was an ash which Cheiron in old days hew'd on a peak of
Pelion and gave it to Achilleus' father to slay men.
Alkimos, Automedon, his two squires, set the immortal
Horses in his chariot. They did their harness about them
Hastily, and bitting each, brought their reins over behind them
Up to the rail. And taking in hand his gaily-adorn'd whip
Automedon climb'd into the forepart over the horses,
And Achileus in his armour, he leapt up next to the driver,
Blazing in his panoply like flaming-robed Hyperion.
Thence in a voice of thunder he cried out unto his horses,

'Now Balios, now Xanthos, immortal, glorious horses,
See you behave otherwise this day and bear me behind you
Back to the camp—tarry at my side till fighting is over,
Not run away and leave me a dead man like to Patroclos.'

Then Xanthos spake under the yoke, that fiery creature,
Bowing his whole head down—his mane droop'd under the yoke-pad

And fell across the collar to the ground, so lowly he bow'd it.
There was a voice given him by Hera, the ivory-shoulder'd.

'Yea, Achileus, grim master, we bear thee safely a season.
Howso thy doomsday draws near. And do not, Achilleus,
Lay any blame upon us: for God, for Destiny doom thee.
No vigilance or swiftness of ours could rescue Patroclos,
No lack of either in us let Trojans capture his armour:
But the son of Leto, high champion of the Immortals,
Slew him in our forefront and gave his glory to Hector.
We'll run against the rushing West-wind, most nimble of all winds,
And never fear to match him: but know *thy* destiny likewise
Is to be slain, Achileus, of a Deity and of a mortal.'

Here the tongue of Xanthos was silenced by the Avengers;
And Achileus was deeply troubled, exclaiming in answer:
'Xanthos, why prophesy my death? This scantly beseems thee.
I know already of myself God means me to die here
And never see my father. But I shall weary the Trojans
Of bloody war and slaughter before I turn me from action.'

So with a shout he headed their whole host, urging his horses!

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